

# **Ilka on the Hill-Top and Other Stories eBook**

## **Ilka on the Hill-Top and Other Stories**

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# Page 1

## ILKA ON THE HILL-TOP

### I.

Mr. Julius Hahn and his son Fritz were on a summer journey in the Tyrol. They had started from Mayrhofen early in the afternoon, on two meek-eyed, spiritless farm horses, and they intended to reach Ginzling before night-fall.

There was a great blaze of splendor hidden somewhere behind the western mountain-tops; broad bars of fiery light were climbing the sky, and the chalets and the Alpine meadows shone in a soft crimson illumination. The Zemmbach, which is of a choleric temperament, was seething and brawling in its rocky bed, and now and then sent up a fierce gust of spray, which blew like an icy shower-bath, into the faces of the travellers.

*"Ach, welch verfluchtes Wetter!"* cried Mr. Hahn fretfully, wiping off the streaming perspiration. "I'll be blasted if you catch me going to the Tyrol again for the sake of being fashionable!"

"But the scenery, father, the scenery!" exclaimed Fritz, pointing toward a great, sun-flushed peak, which rose in majestic isolation toward the north.

"The scenery—bah!" growled the senior Hahn. "For scenery, recommend me to Saxon Switzerland, where you may sit in an easy cushioned carriage without blistering your legs, as I have been doing to-day in this blasted saddle."

"Father, you are too fat," remarked the son, with a mischievous chuckle.

"And you promise fair to tread in my footsteps, son," retorted the elder, relaxing somewhat in his ill-humor.

This allusion to Mr. Fritz's prospective corpulence was not well received by the latter. He gave his horse a smart cut of the whip, which made the jaded animal start off at a sort of pathetic mazurka gait up the side of the mountain.

Mr. Julius Hahn was a person of no small consequence in Berlin. He was the proprietor of the "Haute Noblesse" Concert garden, a highly respectable place of amusement, which enjoyed the especial patronage of the officers of the Royal Guard. Weissbeer, Bairisch, Seidel, Pilsner, in fact all varieties of beer, and as connoisseurs asserted, of exceptional excellence, could be procured at the "Haute Noblesse;" and the most ingenious novelties in the way of gas illumination, besides two military bands, tended greatly to heighten the flavor of the beer, and to put the guests in a festive humor. Mr. Hahn had begun life in a small way with a swallow-tail coat, a white choker, and a napkin on his arm; his stock in trade, which he utilized to good purpose, was a

peculiarly elastic smile and bow, both of which he accommodated with extreme nicety to the social rank of the person to whom they were addressed. He could listen to a conversation in which he was vitally interested, never losing even the shadow of an intonation, with a blank neutrality of countenance which could only be the result of a long transmission of ancestral inanity. He read the depths of your character, divined your little foibles and vanities, and very likely passed his supercilious judgment upon you, seeming all the while the personification of uncritical humility.

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It is needless to say that Mr. Hahn picked up a good deal of valuable information in the course of his career as a waiter; and to him information meant money, and money meant power and a recognized place in society. The diplomatic shrewdness which enabled him to estimate the moral calibre of a patron served him equally well in estimating the value of an investment. He had a hundred subterranean channels of information, and his judgment as to the soundness or unsoundness of a financial enterprise was almost unerring. His little secret transactions on the Bourse, where he had his *commissionaires*, always yielded him ample returns; and when an opportunity presented itself, which he had long foreseen, of buying a suburban garden at a bankrupt sale, he found himself, at least preliminarily, at the goal of his ambition. From this time forth, Mr. Hahn rose rapidly in wealth and power. He kept his thumb, so to speak, constantly on the public pulse, and prescribed amusements as unerringly as a physician prescribes medicine, and usually, it must be admitted, with better results. The "Haute Noblesse" became the favorite resort of fashionable idlers, among whom the military element usually pre-ponderated, and the flash of gilt buttons and the rattle of swords and scabbards could always be counted on as the unvarying accompaniment to the music.

With all his prosperity, however, Mr. Hahn could not be called a happy man. He had one secret sorrow, which, until within a year of his departure for the Tyrol, had been a source of constant annoyance: Mrs. Hahn, whom he had had the indiscretion to marry before he had arrived at a proper recognition of his own worth, was not his equal in intellect; in fact, she was conspicuously his inferior. She had been chamber-maid in a noble family, and had succeeded in marrying Mr. Hahn simply by the fact that she had made up her mind not to marry him. Mr. Hahn, however, was not a man to be baffled by opposition. When the pert Mariana had cut him three times at a dancing-hall, he became convinced that she was the one thing in the world which he needed to make his existence complete. After presenting him with a son, Fritz, and three rather unlovely daughters, she had gradually lost all her pertness (which had been her great charm) and had developed into a stout, dropsical matron, with an abundance of domestic virtues. Her principal trait of character had been a dogged, desperate loyalty. She was loyal to her king, and wore golden imitations of his favorite flowers as jewelry. She was loyal to Mr. Hahn, too; and no amount of maltreatment could convince her that he was not the best of husbands. She adored her former mistress and would insist upon paying respectful little visits to her kitchen, taking her children with her. This latter habit nearly drove her husband to distraction. He stamped his feet, he tore his hair, he swore at her, and I believe, he even struck her; but when the next child was born,—a particularly wonderful one,—Mrs. Hahn had not the strength to resist the temptation of knowing how the new-born wonder would impress the Countess von Markenstein. Another terrible scene followed. The poor woman could never understand that she was no longer the wife of a waiter, and that she must not be paying visits to the great folks in their kitchens.

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Another source of disturbance in Mr. Hahn's matrimonial relations was his wife's absolute refusal to appear in the parquet or the proscenium boxes in the theatre. In this matter her resistance bordered on the heroic; neither threats nor entreaties could move her.

"Law, Julius," she would say, while the tears streamed down over her plump cheeks, "the parquet and the big boxes are for the gentlefolks, and not for humble people like you and me. I know my place, Julius, and I don't want to be the laughing-stock of the town, as I should be, if I went to the opera and sat where my lady the Countess, and the other fine ladies sit. I should feel like a fool, too, Julius, and I should cry my eyes out when I got home."

It may easily be conjectured that Mr. Hahn's mourning covered a very light heart when the dropsy finally carried off this loving but troublesome spouse. Nor did he make any secret of the fact that her death was rather a relief to him, while on the other hand he gave her full credit for all her excellent qualities. Fritz, who was in cordial sympathy with his father's ambition for social eminence, had also learned from him to be ashamed of his mother, and was rather inclined to make light of the sorrow which he actually felt, when he saw the cold earth closing over her.

At the time when he made his summer excursion in the Tyrol, Fritz was a stout blond youth of two and twenty. His round, sleek face was not badly modelled, but it had neither the rough openness, characteristic of a peasant, nor yet that indefinable finish which only culture can give. In spite of his jaunty, fashionable attire, you would have put him down at once as belonging to what in the Old World is called "the middle class." His blue eyes indicated shrewdness, and his red cheeks habitual devotion to the national beverage. He was apparently a youth of the sort that Nature is constantly turning out by the thousand—mere weaker copies of progenitors, who by an unpropitious marriage have enfeebled instead of strengthening the type. Circumstances might have made anything of him in a small way; for, as his countenance indicated, he had no very pronounced proclivities, either good or bad. He had spent his boyhood in a gymnasium, where he had had greater success in trading jack-knives than in grappling with Cicero. He had made two futile attempts to enter the Berlin University, and had settled down to the conviction that he had mistaken his calling, as his tastes were military rather than scholarly; but, as he was too old to rectify this mistake, he had chosen to go to the Tyrol in search of pleasure rather than to the Military Academy in search of distinction.

At the mouth of the great ravine of Dornauberg the travellers paused and dismounted. Mr. Hahn called the guide, who was following behind with a horse laden with baggage, and with his assistance a choice repast, consisting of all manner of cold curiosities, was served on a large flat rock. The senior Hahn fell to work with a will and made no pretence of being interested in the sombre magnificence of the Dornauberg, while Fritz

found time for an occasional exclamation of rapture, flavored with caviar, Rhine wine, and *pate de foie gras*.



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"*Ach, Gott, Fritz*, what stuff you can talk!" grumbled his father, sipping his Johannisberger with the air of a connoisseur. "When I was of your age, Fritz, I had—hush, what is that?"

Mr. Hahn put down his glass with such an energy that half of the precious contents was spilled.

"*Ach, du lieber Gott*," he cried a moment later. "*Wie wunderschön!*"

From a mighty cliff overhanging the road, about a hundred feet distant, came a long yodling call, peculiar to the Tyrol, sung in a superb ringing baritone. It soared over the mountain peaks and died away somewhere among the Ingent glaciers. And just as the last faint note was expiring, a girl's voice, fresh and clear as a dew-drop, took it up and swelled it and carolled it until, from sheer excess of delight, it broke into a hundred leaping, rolling, and warbling tones, which floated and gambolled away over the highlands, while soft-winged echoes bore them away into the wide distance.

"Father," said Fritz, who was now lying outstretched on a soft Scotch plaid smoking the most fragrant of weeds; "if you can get those two voices to the 'Haute Noblesse,' for the next season it is ten thousand thalers in your pocket; and I shall only charge you ten per cent. for the suggestion."

"Suggestion, you blockhead! Why, the thought flashed through my head the very moment I heard the first note. But hush—there they are again."

From the cliff, sung to the air of a Tyrolese folk-song, came this stanza:

Tell me, Ilka on the hill-top,  
While the Alpine breezes blow,  
Are thy golden locks as golden  
As they were a year ago?  
(Yodle) Hohli-ohli-ohli-ho!

Hohli-ohli-ohli-ho! Hohlio-oh!

The effect of the yodle, in which both the baritone of the cliff and the Alpine soprano united, was so melodious that Mr. Hahn sprang to his feet and swore an ecstatic oath, while Fritz, from sheer admiring abstraction, almost stuck the lighted end of his cigar into his mouth. The soprano answered:

Tell me, Hansel in the valley,  
While the merry cuckoos crow,  
Is thy bristly beard as bristly  
As it was a year ago?



Hohli-ohli-ohli-ho!  
Hohli-ohli-ohli-ho! Hohli-oh!

The yodling refrain this time was arch, gay—full of mocking laughter and mirth. Then the responsive singing continued:

*Hansel:* Tell me, Ilka on the hill-top,  
While the crimson glaciers glow,  
Are thine eyes as blue and beaming  
As they were a year ago?

*Both:* Hohli-ohli, etc.

*Ilka:* Hansel, Hansel in the valley  
I will tell you true;  
If mine eyes are blue and beaming,  
What is that, I pray, to you?

*Both:* Hohli-ohli, etc.



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*Hansel:* Tell me, Ilka on the hill-top,  
While the blushing roses blow,  
Are thy lips as sweet for kissing  
As they were a year ago?

*Both:* Hohli-ohli, etc.

*Ilka:* Naughty Hansel in the valley,  
Naughty Hansel, tell me true,  
If my lips are sweet for kissing,  
What is that, I pray, to you?

*Both:* Hohli-ohli, etc.

*Hansel:* Tell me, Ilka on the hill-top,  
While the rivers seaward flow,  
Is thy heart as true and loving  
As it was a year ago?

*Both:* Hohli-ohli, etc.

*Ilka:* Dearest Hansel in the valley,  
I will tell you, tell you true.  
Yes, my heart is ever loving,  
True and loving unto you!

*Both:* Hohli-ohli-ohli-ho!  
Hohli-ohli-ohli-ho! Hohli-oh!

For a few moments their united voices seemed still to be quivering in the air, then to be borne softly away by the echoes into the cool distance of the glaciers. A solitary thrush began to warble on a low branch of a stunted fir-tree, and a grasshopper raised its shrill voice in emulation. The sun was near its setting; the bluish evening shadows crept up the sides of the ice-peaks, whose summits were still flushed with expiring tints of purple and red.

Mr. Hahn rose, yawned and stretched his limbs. Fritz threw the burning stump of his cigar into the depths of the ravine, and stood watching it with lazy interest while it fell. The guide cleared away the remnants of the repast and began to resaddle the horses.

“Who was that girl we heard singing up on the Alp?” said Mr. Hahn, with well-feigned indifference, as he put his foot in the stirrup and made a futile effort to mount. “Curse the mare, why don’t you make her stand still?”

“Pardon, your honor,” answered the guide stolidly; “but she isn’t used to the saddle. The girl’s name is Ilka on the Hill-top. She is the best singer in all the valley.”

“Ilka on the Hill-top! How—where does she live?”



“She lives on a farm called the Hill-top, a mile and a half from Mayrhofen.”

“And the man who answered—is he her sweetheart?”

“Yes, your honor. They have grown up together, and they mean to marry some time, when they get money enough to buy out the old woman.”

“And what did you say his name was?”

“Hansel the Hunter. He is a garnet polisher by trade, because his father was that before him; but he is a good shot and likes roving in the woods better than polishing stones.”

“Hm,” grumbled Mr. Hahn, mounting with a prodigious effort.



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### II.

It was in the autumn of 1863, only a few weeks after Mr. Hahn's visit to Ginzling and Dornauberg. There were war and rumors of war in the air. The Austrians and the Prussians were both mobilizing army-corps after army-corps, and all the Tyrolese youth, liable to service, were ordered to join their regiments. The Schleswig-Holstein question was being violently debated in the German and the English press, the former clamoring for blood, the latter counselling moderation. The Danish press was as loud-mouthed as any, and, if the battles could have been fought with words, would no doubt have come out victorious.

It had been a sad day at the Hill-top. Early in the morning Hansel, with a dozen other young fellows of the neighborhood, had marched away to the music of fife and drum, and there was no knowing when they would come back again. A dismal whitish fog had been hovering about the fields all day long, but had changed toward evening into a fine drizzling rain,—one of those slow, hopeless rains that seem to have no beginning and no end. Old Mother Uberta, who, although she pretended to be greatly displeased at Ilka's matrimonial choice, persisted in holding her responsible for all her lover's follies, had been going about the house grumbling and scolding since the early dawn.

"Humph," said Mother Uberta, as she lighted a pine-knot and stuck it into a crack in the wall (for it was already dark, and candles were expensive), "it is a great sin and shame—the lad is neither crooked nor misshapen—the Lord has done well enough by him, Heaven knows; and yet never a stroke of work has he done since his poor father went out of the world as naked as he came into it. A shiftless, fiddling, and galavanting set they have always been, and me then as has only this one lass, givin' her away, with my eyes wide open, into misery."

Ilka, who was sitting before the open fire-place mingling her furtive tears with the wool she was carding, here broke into a loud sob, and hid her face in her hands.

"You always say mean things to me, mother, when Hansel is away," sobbed she, "but when he is here, you let on as if you liked him ever so much."

The mother recognized this as a home-thrust, and wisely kept silent. She wet her finger-tips, twirled the thread, stopped the wheel, inspected some point in its mechanism with a scowl of intense preoccupation, and then spun on again with a severe concentration of interest as if lovers were of small consequence compared to spinning-wheels. Mother Uberta was a tall, stately woman of fifty, with a comely wrinkled face, and large, well-modelled features. You saw at once that life was a serious business to her, and that she gave herself no quarter.



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“Humph!” she began after awhile with that indefinable interjection of displeasure which defies all spelling. “You talk like the witless creature that you are. Didn’t I tell the lad, two years ago, Michaelmas was, that the day he could pay off the mortgage on the farm, he should have you and the farm too? And eight hundred and fifty florins oughtn’t to frighten a man as has got the right spirit in him. And there was Ruodi of Gaenzelstein, as has got a big farm of his own, and Casper Thinglen with fifteen hundred a-comin’ to him when his grandfather dies; and you sendin’ them both off with worse grace than if they had been beggars askin’ you for a shillin’. Now, stop your snivellin’ there, I tell you. You are like your poor sainted father,—God bless him where he lies,—he too used to cry, likely enough, if a flea bit him.”

At this moment Mother Uberta’s monologue was interrupted by a loud rapping on the door; she bent down to attach the unfinished thread properly, but before she had completed this delicate operation, the door was opened, and two men entered. Seeing that they were strangers she sent them a startled glance, which presently changed into one of defiance. The fire was low, and the two men stood but dimly defined in the dusky light; but their city attire showed at once that they were not Tyrolese. And Mother Uberta, having heard many awful tales of what city-dressed men were capable of doing, had a natural distrust of the species.

“And pray, sir, what may your errand be?” she asked sternly, taking the burning pine-knot from its crack and holding it close to the face of the tallest stranger.

“My name is Hahn, madam,” answered the person whose broad expanse of countenance was thus suddenly illuminated, “and this is my son, Mr. Fritz Hahn. Allow me to assure you, madam, that our errand here is a most peaceful and friendly one, and that we deeply regret it, if our presence incommodes you.”

“Ilka, light the candles,” said Mother Uberta, sullenly. “And you,” she continued, turning again to Mr. Hahn, “find yourself a seat, until we can see what you look like.”

“What a vixen of an old woman!” whispered the proprietor of the “Haute Noblesse” to his son, as they seated themselves on the hard wooden bench near the window.

“Small chance for the ‘Haute Noblesse,’ I fear,” responded Fritz, flinging his travelling cap on the clean-scoured deal table.

Ilka, who in the meanwhile had obeyed her mother’s injunction, now came forward with two lighted tallow dips, stuck in shining brass candle-sticks, and placed them on the table before the travellers. She made a neat little courtesy before each of them, to which they responded with patronizing nods.

“*Parbleu! Elle est charmante!*” exclaimed Fritz, fixing a bold stare on the girl’s blushing face.

“*Bien charmante,*” replied Mr. Hahn, who took a great pride in the little French he had picked up when he carried a napkin over his shoulder.



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And indeed, Ilka was *charmante* as she stood there in the dim candle-light, her great innocent eyes dilated with child-like wonder, her thick blond braids hanging over her shoulders, and the picturesque Tyrolese costume—a black embroidered velvet waist, blue apron, and short black skirt—setting off her fine figure to admirable advantage. She was a tall, fresh-looking girl, of stately build, without being stout, with a healthy blooming countenance and an open, guileless expression. Most people would have pronounced her beautiful, but her beauty was of that rudimentary, unindividualized kind which is found so frequently among the peasantry of all nations. To Fritz Hahn, however who was not a philosophical observer, she seemed the most transcendent phenomenon his eyes had ever beheld.

“To make a long story short, madam,” began Mr. Hahn after a pause, during which Mother Uberta had been bristling silently while firing defiant glances at the two strangers, “I am the proprietor of a great establishment in Berlin—the ‘Haute Noblesse’—you may have heard of it.”

“No, I never heard of it,” responded Mother Uberta, emphatically, as if anxious to express her disapproval, on general principles, of whatever statements Mr. Hahn might choose to make.

“Well, well, madam,” resumed the latter, a trifle disconcerted, “it makes very little difference whether you have heard of it or not. I see, however, that you are a woman of excellent common sense, and I will therefore be as brief as possible—avoid circumlocutions, so to speak.”

“Yes, exactly,” said Mother Uberta, nodding impatiently, as if eager to help him on.

“Madame Uberta,—for that, as I understand, is your honored name,—would you like to get one thousand florins?”

“That depends upon how I should get ‘em,” answered the old woman sharply. “I shouldn’t like to get ‘em by stealin’.”

“I mean, of course, if you had honestly earned them,” said Hahn.

“I am afeard honesty with you and with me ain’t exactly the same thing.”

Mr. Hahn was about to swear, but mindful of his cherished enterprise, he wisely refrained.

“I beg leave to inform you, Madame Uberta,” he observed, “that it is gentlemen of honor you have to deal with, and that whatever proposals they may make you will be of an honorable character.”

“And I am very glad to hear that, I am sure,” responded the undaunted Uberta.



“Three weeks ago, when we were travelling in this region,” continued Hahn, determined not to allow his temper to be ruffled, “we heard a most wonderful voice yodling in the mountains. We went away, but have now returned, and having learned that the voice was your daughter’s, we have come here to offer her a thousand florins if she will sing her native Tyrolese airs for eight weeks at our Concert Garden, the ‘Haute Noblesse.’”

“One thousand florins for eight weeks, mother!” exclaimed Ilka, who had been listening to Hahn’s speech with breathless interest. “Then I could pay off the mortgage and we should not have to pay interest any more, and I should have one hundred and fifty florins left for my dowry.”



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“Hush, child, hush! You don’t know what you are talkin’ about,” said the mother severely. Then turning to Hahn: “I should like to put one question to both of you, and when you have answered that, I’ll give my answer, which there is no wrigglin’ out of. If the old woman went along, would ye *then* care so much about the singin’ of the daughter?”

“Certainly, by all means,” responded Hahn promptly; but Fritz was so absorbed in polishing his finger-nails with a little instrument designed especially for that purpose, that he forgot to answer.

A long consultation now followed, and the end of it was that Ilka agreed to go to Berlin and sing for eight weeks, in her national costume, on condition that her travelling expenses and those of her mother should be defrayed by the manager. Mr. Hahn also agreed to pay for the board and lodgings of the two women during their sojourn in the capital and to pay Ilka the one thousand florins (and this was a point upon which Mother Uberta strenuously insisted) in weekly instalments.

The next day the contract was drawn up in legal form, properly stamped and signed; whereupon Mother Uberta and Ilka started with Hahn and Fritz for Berlin.

### III.

The restaurant of the “Haute Noblesse” was a splendid specimen of artistic decoration. The walls were frescoed with all sorts of marvellous hunting scenes, which Fritz had gradually incorporated in his own autobiography. Here stags were fleeing at a furious speed before a stout young gentleman on horseback, who was levelling his deadly aim at them; there the same stout young gentleman, with whiskers and general appearance slightly altered, was standing behind a big tree, firing at a hare who was coming straight toward him, pursued by a pack of terrible hounds; again, on a third wall, the stout young gentleman had undergone a further metamorphosis which almost endangered his identity; he was standing at the edge of a swamp, and a couple of ducks were making somersaults in the air, as they fluttered with bruised wings down to where the dogs stood expecting them; on wall number four, which contained the *chef-d’oeuvre* of the collection, the young Nimrod, who everywhere bore a more or less remote resemblance to Fritz Hahn, was engaged in a mortal combat with a wild boar, and was performing miraculous feats of strength and prowess. The next room,—to which it was, for some unknown reason, deemed a high privilege to be admitted,—was ornamented with a variety of trophies of the chase, which were intended, no doubt, as incontestable proofs of the veracity of the frescoed narrative. There were stuffed stags’ heads crowned with enormous antlers (of a species, as a naturalist asserted, which is not found outside of North America), heads of bears, the insides of whose mouths were painted in the bloodiest of colors, and boars, whose upward-pointed tusks gave evidence of incredible blood-thirstiness. Even the old clock in the corner (a piece of furniture which every



customer took pains to assure Mr. Hahn that he envied him) had a frame of curiously carved and intertwined antlers, the ingenious workmanship of which deserved all the admiration which it received. Mr. Hahn had got it for a song at an auction somewhere in the provinces; but the history of the clock which Fritz told omitted mentioning this incident.



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In this inner room on the 19th of April, 1864, Mr. Hahn and his son were holding a solemn consultation. The news of the fall of Duppel, and the consequent conquest of all Schleswig, had just been received, and the capital was in a fever of warlike enthusiasm. That two great nations like the Prussians and the Austrians, counting together more than fifty millions, could conquer poor little Denmark, with its two millions, seemed at that time a great and glorious feat, and the conquerors have never ceased to be proud of it. Mr. Hahn, of course, was overflowing with loyalty and patriotism, which, like all his other sentiments, he was anxious to convert into cash. He had therefore made arrangements for a *Siegesfest*, on a magnificent scale, which was to take place on the second of May, when the first regiments of the victorious army were expected in Berlin. It was the details of this festival which he and Fritz had been plotting in the back room at the restaurant, and they were both in a state of agreeable agitation at the thought of the tremendous success which would, no doubt, result from their combined efforts. It was decided that Ilka, whom by various pretexts Mr. Hahn had managed to detain in Berlin through the whole winter, should appear in a highly fantastic costume as Germania, and sing "Die Wacht am Rhein" and "Heil dir im Siegeskranz," as a greeting to the returning warriors. If the weather proved favorable, the garden was to be brilliantly illuminated, and the likenesses of King Wilhelm, Bismarck, and von Moltke were to appear in gas-jets, each surmounting a triumphal arch, which was to be erected in front of the stage and at the two entrances to the garden.

"As regards that Tyrolese wench," said Fritz, as he lighted a fresh cigar, "are you sure we can persuade her to don the Germania costume? She seems to have some pretty crooked notions on some points, and the old woman, you know, is as balky as a stage horse."

"Leave that to me, Fritzchen, leave that to me," replied the father, confidently. "I know how to manage the women. Thirty years' practice, my dear—thirty years' practice goes for more in such matters than a stripling like you can imagine."

This remark, for some reason, seemed to irritate Mr. Fritz exceedingly. He thrust his hands deeply into his pockets, and began to stalk up and down the floor with a sullen, discontented air.

"Aha! you old fox," he muttered to himself, "you have been hunting on my preserves. But I'll catch you in your own trap, as sure as my name is Fritz."

"The sly young rascal!" thought Mr. Hahn; "you have been sniffing in your father's cupboard, have you?"

"Fritz, my dear," he said aloud, stretching himself with a long, hypocritical yawn, "it is ridiculous for two fellows like you and me to wear masks in each other's presence. We don't care a straw for the whole *Sieges* business, do we, Fritz, except for the dollars and cents of it? I am deucedly sleepy, and I am going to bed."



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“And so am I, father dear,” responded Fritz, with a sudden outburst of affection. “Yes, yes, father,” he continued heartily, “you and I understand each other. I am a chip of the old block, I am—he, he!”

And with the most effusive cordiality this affectionate parent and son separated, with the avowed purpose of seeking oblivion in slumber, in their respective apartments.

“Perhaps I have been doing the old fellow injustice, after all,” thought Fritz, as he clasped his father’s hand once more at the bottom of the staircase.

“The young gosling hasn’t ventured into such deep water as I thought,” murmured the happy father, as he stood listening to Fritz’s footsteps re-echoing through the empty corridors.

### IV.

Mr. Hahn, Sr., having satisfied himself as to his son’s sincerity, retired to his private chamber; not for the purpose of going to rest, however, but in order to make an elaborate toilet, having completed which, he hailed a droschke and drove to an obscure little street in the Friedrich-Wilhelm Stadt, where he ordered the coachman to stop. As he was preparing to dismount, he saw to his astonishment another droschke driving away from the door which he was intending to enter.

“Hm,” growled Hahn, “if she has been making acquaintances, she isn’t the girl I took her for. But there are other people living in the house, and the visit may not have been for her.”

Clinging fondly to this hope, he climbed with wary steps two flights of dark and narrow stairs, which was no easy feat for an elderly gentleman of his bulk. As he reached the second landing, panting and breathless, he found himself in violent contact with another person, who, like himself, seemed to be fumbling for the bell-handle.

“Beg your pardon, sir,” said a voice in the dark.

“What, you sneaking young villain!” cried Hahn in great wrath (for the voice was only too familiar to him); “I might have known you were up to some devilish trick, or you wouldn’t —”

Here the senior Hahn choked, and was seized with a violent coughing fit.

“You miserable old sinner!” hissed Fritz; “the devil has already got his finger on your throat.”



This was too much for Mr. Hahn; he made a rush for his rival, and in a moment he and Fritz were grappling furiously in the dark. It seemed about an even chance who was to be precipitated down the steep staircase; but just as the father was within an inch of the dangerous edge, the hall door was torn open, and Mother Uberta, followed by Ilka with a lamp in her hand, sprang forward, grasped the combatants in her strong arms and flung them against the opposite wall. They both fell on the floor, but each managed, without serious injury, to extricate himself from the other's embrace.

"You are a fine, well-behaved lot, you are!" broke out Mother Uberta, planting herself, with arms akimbo, in front of the two culprits, and dispensing her adjectives with equal liberality to both.

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“It was a mistake, madam, I assure you,” said Hahn huskily, as he pulled out his handkerchief, and began to whip the dust off his trowsers.

The wreath of thin hair which he had carefully combed, so as to make the nakedness of his crown less conspicuous, was bristling toward all the points of the compass. His tall hat had gone on an independent journey down the stairs, and was heard tumbling deliberately from step to step. Fritz, who had recovered himself much more rapidly, seemed to have forgotten that he had himself borne any part in the disgraceful scene; he looked at his father with kind of a pitying superiority, and began to assist him in the repair of his toilet, with the air of an officious outsider, all of which the crest-fallen father endured with great fortitude. He seemed only anxious to explain the situation to the two women, who were still viewing him with marked disapproval.

“It was all a mistake, madam—a great mistake,” he kept repeating.

“A great mistake!” ejaculated Mother Uberta, contemptuously. “This isn’t a time to be makin’ mistakes outside the door of two lonely women.”

“It is fifteen minutes past nine,” said Hahn meekly, pulling a corpulent gold watch from the pocket of his waistcoat.

“Madam,” said Fritz, without the slightest air of apology, “I came here to consult you on a matter of business, which would bear no delay.”

“Exactly, exactly,” interrupted Hahn eagerly. “So did I, a matter of business which would bear no delay.”

“Well, *Vaeterchen*, we are simple countrywomen, and we don’t understand city manners. But if you want to see me on business, I shall be at home to-morrow at twelve o’clock.”

So saying, Mother Uberta slammed the door in the faces of her visitors, and left them to grope their way in the dark down the steep stairway. It was highly characteristic, both of the senior and the junior Hahn, that without a word of explanation they drove home amicably in the same droschke.

Ilka’s engagement at the “Haute Noblesse” in the autumn had proved a great success, and Mother Uberta, who was never averse to earning money, had, without difficulty, been persuaded to remain in Berlin during the winter, on condition of the renewal of their contract for another six weeks in the spring. Ilka was in the meanwhile to take lessons in singing at Hahn’s expense, possibly with a view to future distinction as a prima donna of the opera. Her *maestro* had told her repeatedly that she had naturally a better voice than Nilsson, and that, if she could dry up for ever her fountain of tears, she might become a great *artiste*. For Ilka had the deplorable habit of crying on very slight

provocation. The *maestro*, with his wild hair, his long, polished nails, and his frantic gesticulations, frightened and distressed her; she thought and spoke of him as a kind of curious animal, and nothing could persuade her that he and she belonged to the same



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species. Nor did Mr. Hahn and Fritz seem to her more than half human. Their constant presents and attentions sometimes annoyed, and frequently alarmed her. She could not rid herself of the apprehension, that behind their honeyed words and manners they were hiding some sinister purpose. She could not comprehend how her mother could talk so freely and fearlessly with them. She thought of Hansel, who was away in the war, and many an evening she stood outside the telegraph-office with a quaking heart, waiting for the bulletin with the names of the dead and the wounded; but Hansel's name was never among them. And many a night she lay awake, yearning for Hansel, praying for him, and blessing him. She seemed to hear his gay and careless laugh ringing from Alp to Alp—how different from the polite smirk of the junior, the fat grin of the senior Hahn! She saw his tall, agile figure standing upon a rock leaning upon his gun, outlined against the blue horizon,—and she heard his strong clear voice yodling and calling to her from afar. It is not to be wondered at that Ilka did not thrive in Berlin as well as her mother did; just as the tender-petaled alpine rose can only breathe the cool breezes of its native mountains, and withers and droops if transplanted to a garden.

Mother Uberta was by no means blind to the fact that both Fritz and his father had designs on her daughter, and having convinced herself that their prosperity rested on a solid basis, she was not disinclined to favor their suits. The only difficulty was to make a choice between them; and having ascertained that Fritz was entirely dependent upon his father's bounty, she quickly decided in favor of the father. But she was too wise to allow Mr. Hahn to suspect that he was a desirable son-in-law, being rather addicted to the belief that men only worship what seems utterly beyond their reach. Ilka, it is needless to say, was not a party to these speculations; to her the Hahns appeared equally undesirable in any capacity whatsoever.

As for the proprietor of the "Haute Noblesse," I believe he was suffering from an honest infatuation. He admired Ilka's face, he admired her neck, her figure, her voice, her ankles as displayed by the short Tyrolese skirt; he wandered about in a sort of frenzy of unrest, and was never happy except in her presence. That a certain amount of speculation entered into love's young dream, I cannot positively deny; but, on the whole, the emotion was as sincere as any that Mr. Hahn's bosom had ever harbored. Whether he should allow her to sing in public after she had become his wife was a point about which he sometimes worried, but which he ended by deciding in the affirmative. It was a splendid investment for the "Haute Noblesse."



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Mr. Fritz's matrimonial speculations took a somewhat different turn. He raved to his friends about the perfection of Ilka's physical development; talked about her "points" as if she had been a horse. So much of cynicism always mingled with his ardor that his devotion could hardly be dignified by the name of love. He was convinced that if he could keep Ilka for some years in Berlin and persuade her to continue cultivating her voice, she would some day be a great prima donna. And Fritz had an idea that prima donnas always grew immensely rich, and married worthless husbands whom they allowed great liberties in financial matters. Fritz had no objection to playing this subordinate part, as long as he could be sure of "having a good time." Beyond this point his ambition had never extended. In spite of his great confidence in his own irresistibility, and his frequent boasts of the favors he had received from the maiden of his choice, he knew in his heart that his wooing had so far been very unprosperous, and that the prospects for the future were not encouraging. Ilka could never rid herself of the impression that Fritz was to be taken very seriously,—that, in fact, there was something almost awful about him. She could laugh at old Hahn's jokes, and if he attempted to take liberties she could push him away, or even give him a slap on his broad back. But Fritz's talk frightened her by its very unintelligibility; his mirth seemed terrible; it was like hearing a man laugh in his sleep; and his touch made her shudder.

### V.

The return of the first regiments of the united armies was delayed until after the middle of May, and the *Siegesfest* accordingly had to be postponed. But the delay was rather in Mr. Hahn's favor, as it gave him ample time to perfect his arrangements, so that, when the day arrived, the "Haute Noblesse" presented a most brilliant appearance. Vividly colored transparencies, representing the most sanguinary battle scenes in more or less fictitious surroundings were suspended among the trees; Danish officers were seen in all sorts of humble attitudes, surrendering their swords or begging for mercy, while the Prussian and Austrian heroes, maddened with warlike fury, stormed onward in the path of glory and victory. The gas-jet programme, with the royal and military portraits, was carried out to perfection; and each new wonder was hailed with immense enthusiasm by the assembled multitude. Innumerable Chinese lanterns glimmered throughout the garden, and from time to time red, white, and blue magnesium lights sent up a great blaze of color among the trees, now making the budding leaves blush crimson, now silvering them, as with hoar-frost, or illuminating their delicate tracery with an intense blue which shone out brilliantly against the nocturnal sky. Even the flower-beds were made to participate in the patriotic frenzy; and cunning imitations, in colored glass, of tulips, lilies, and roses, with little gas-jets concealed in their chalices, were scattered among the natural flowers, which looked like ghosts of their real selves among the splendid counterfeits. In order to tune the audience into perfect accord with the occasion, Mr. Hahn had also engaged three monster bands, which, since early in the afternoon, had been booming forth martial melodies from three different platforms draped in national banners.

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The hour was now approaching when Germania was to lift up her voice to celebrate the glorious achievements of her sons. The audience, which consisted largely of soldiers and officers, were thronging forward to the tribune where she was advertised to appear, and the waiters, who had difficulty in supplying the universal demand for beer, had formed a line from the bar to the platform, along which the foam-crowned schooners were passing in uninterrupted succession. Fritz, who was fond of fraternizing with the military profession, had attached himself to a young soldier in Austrian uniform with the iron cross upon his bosom. They were seated amicably together at a small table near the stage, and the soldier, by liberal treats of beer, had been induced to relate some of his adventures in the war. He was a tall, robust man, with a large blonde mustache and an open, fearless countenance. He talked very modestly about his own share in the victories, and cooled Fritz's enthusiasm by the extreme plainness of his statements.

"It was rather an uneven game at the start," he said. "They were so few and we were so many. We couldn't have helped whipping them, even if we had done worse than we did."

"You don't mean to say that we were not brave," responded Fritz, with an ardor which was more than half feigned.

"No, I don't say that," said the warrior, gravely. "We were brave, and so were they. Therefore the numbers had to decide it."

He emptied his glass and rose to go.

"No, wait a moment," urged Fritz, laying hold of his arm. "Take another glass. You must stay and hear Germania. She is to sing 'Die Wacht am Rhein' and 'Heil dir in Siegeskranz'."

"Very well," answered the soldier, seating himself again. "I have furlough for to-night, and I can stay here as well as anywhere."

Two more glasses were ordered, and presently arrived.

"Listen!" began Fritz, leaning confidentially across the table. "I suppose you have a sweetheart?"

"Yes, I have, God bless her," replied the other simply, "though I haven't seen her these six months, and not heard from her, either. She isn't much of a hand for writing, and, somehow, I never could get the right crooks on the letters."

"Here's to her health," said Fritz, lifting his glass and touching it to that of his companion.

"With all my heart," responded the latter, and drained the beer mug at one draught.



They sat for a while in silence, Fritz trying to estimate the pecuniary value of the audience, the soldier gazing, with a half-sad and dreamy expression, into the dark sky.

“Curious lot, the women,” broke out the junior Hahn chuckling to himself, as if absorbed in some particularly delightful retrospect. “There is the girl, now, who is to sing as Germania to-night,—and, between you and me, I don’t mind telling you that she is rather smitten with me. She is as fine a specimen of a woman as ever trod in two shoes; splendid arms, a neck like alabaster with the tiniest tinge of red in it, and—well, I might expatiate further, but I wont. Now, you wouldn’t think it of a girl like that; but the fact is, she is as arch and coquettish as a kitten. It was only the other night I went to see her—the old woman was in the room—”

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A tremendous burst of applause completely drowned Fritz's voice, as Germania walked out upon the stage. She was dressed in white, flowing robes, with a golden zone about her waist and a glittering diadem in her hair. A mantle of the finest white cashmere, fastened with a Roman clasp on her left shoulder and drawn through the zone on the right side, showed the fierce Prussian eagle, embroidered in black and gold. A miniature copy of the same glorious bird, also in gilt embroidery, shone on her breast. She had been, elaborately trained by her *maestro* as to how she was to step the stage, what attitudes she was to assume, *etc.*, and the first part of the programme she performed very creditably, and with sole reference to her instructions.

The orchestra began to rumble something by way of an introduction. The soldier in the Austrian uniform at Fritz's table turned pale, and sat staring fixedly upon the stage. Ilka stood for a moment gazing out upon the surging mass of humanity at her feet; she heard the clanking of the scabbards and swords, and saw the white and the blue uniforms commingled in friendly confusion. Where was Hansel now—the dear, gay, faithful Hansel? She struck out boldly, and her strong, sonorous voice soared easily above the orchestral accompaniments. “Heil dir im Siegeskranz!”—she was hailing the returning warriors with a song of triumph, while Hansel, perhaps, lay on some bloody battle-field, with sightless eyes staring against the awful sky. Ilka's voice began to tremble, and the tears flooded her beautiful eyes. The soldier in the Austrian uniform trembled, too, and never removed his gaze from the countenance of the singer. There was joy and triumph in her song; but there was sorrow, too—sorrow for the many brave ones that remained behind, sorrow for the maidens that loved them and the mothers that wept for them. As Ilka withdrew, after having finished the last stanza, the audience grew almost frantic with enthusiasm; the men jumped up on benches and tables, shouted, and swung their hats, and even the women cheered at the tops of their voices. A repetition was loudly called for, and Ilka, although herself overcome with emotion, was obliged to yield. She walked up to the footlights and began to yodle softly. It sounded strangely airy and far away. She put her hand to her ear and listened for a moment, as if she expected a reply; but there was a breathless silence in the audience. Only a heavy sigh came from the table where Fritz sat with the Austrian soldier. The yodle grew louder; then suddenly some one sprang up, not a dozen rods from the stage, and sang, in a deep, magnificent baritone:

Tell me, Ilka on the hill-top,  
While the rivers seaward flow,  
Is thy heart as true and loving  
As it was a year ago?  
Hohli-ohli-ohli-ho!  
Hohli-ohli-ohli-ho! Hohli-oh!

Ilka stood for a while as if stunned; her eyes peered in the direction whence the voice had come; her face lighted up with a sweet, serene happiness; but the tears streamed down her cheeks as she answered:



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Dearest Hansel in the valley,  
I will tell you, tell you true,  
Yes, my heart is ever loving,  
True and loving unto you!  
Hohli-ohli-ohli-ho!  
Hohli-ohli-ohli-ho! Hohli-oh!

Suddenly she made a leap over the edge of the stage, and in the next moment the gorgeous Germania lay sobbing on the soldier's bosom. It made a very touching tableau, and some of the male sceptics among the audience were inclined to view it in that light. Fritz Hahn, as soon as the idea was suggested to him, eagerly adopted it, and admitted in confidence to half a dozen friends, whom he had allowed to suspect the fair singer's devotion to him, that it was all a pre-arranged effect, and that he was himself the author of it.

"Germania weeping on the breast of her returning son," he said. "What could be more appropriate on a day like this?"

The maidens and matrons, however, would listen to no such theory; they wept openly at the sight of the reunited lovers, and have until this day maintained that the scene was too spontaneous and genuine to be a product of Mr. Hahn's inventive genius.

The singing of "Die Wacht am Rhein," although advertised on the programme, had to be indefinitely postponed, for Germania had suddenly disappeared, and was nowhere to be found. The Austrian soldier, however, was seen later in the evening, and some one heard him inquiring in a fierce tone for the junior Hahn; but the junior Hahn, probably anticipating some unpleasantness, had retired from the public gaze.

## VI.

Six weeks after this occurrence—it was St. John's day—there was a merry festival in the village of Mayrhofen. Ilka and Hansel were bride and groom, and as they returned from church the maidens of the village walked in the wedding procession and strewed flowers before them. And in the evening, when the singing and fiddling and dancing were at an end, and the guests had departed, Mother Uberta beckoned Hansel aside, and with a mysterious air handed him something heavy tied up in the corner of a handkerchief.

"There," she said, "is eight hundred and fifty florins. It is Ilka's own money which she earned in Berlin. Now you may pay off the mortgage, and the farm is yours."



“Mother Uberta,” answered Hansel laughing, and pulling out a skin purse from his bosom. “Here is what I have been saving these many years. It is eight hundred and fifty florins.”

“Hansel, Hansel,” cried Mother Uberta in great glee, “it is what I have always said of you. You are a jewel of a lad.”

## **ANNUNCIATA.**

**I.**



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In the gallery of one of the famous Roman villas which commands a splendid view of the city, Mr. Henry Vincent, a young American, was lounging. Judging by his appearance he was a college graduate, or, to speak more definitely, a graduate of Harvard; for he had that jaunty walk and general trimness of attire which are the traditional attributes of the academical denizens of Cambridge. He swung his arms rather more than was needed to assist locomotion, and betrayed in an unobtrusive manner a consciousness of being well dressed. His face, which was not without fine possibilities, had an air of well-bred neutrality; you could see that he assumed a defensive attitude against aesthetic impressions,—that even the Sistine Madonna or the Venus of Milo would not have surprised him into anything like enthusiasm or abject approval. It was evident, too, that he was a little bit ashamed of his Baedeker, which he consulted only in a semi-surreptitious way, and plunged into the pocket of his overcoat whenever he believed himself to be observed. Such a contingency, however, seemed remote; for the silence that reigned about him was as heavy and profound as if it had been unbroken since creation's day. The large marble halls had a grave and inhospitable air, and their severe magnificence compelled even from our apathetic traveller a shy and reluctant veneration. He tried to fix his attention upon a certain famous Guido which was attached by hinges to the wall, and which, as he had just learned from Baedeker, was a marvel of color and fine characterization; he stood for a few moments staring with a blank and helpless air, as if, for the first time in his life, he was beginning to question the finality of his own judgment. Then his eyes wandered off to the cornice of the wall, whose florid rococo upholstery won his sincere approval.

“Hang it!” he murmured impatiently, pulling a gold watch from his waistcoat pocket. “That loon Jack—he never does keep an engagement.”

At this moment, distant footsteps were heard, which, as they approached, resounded with a sepulchral distinctness on the marble pavement. Presently a young man entered breathlessly, holding his hat in one hand and a white handkerchief in the other.

“Harry,” he cried, excitedly, “I have found the goddess of the place. Come quick, before she vanishes. It is a rare chance, I tell you.”

He seized his companion's arm and, ignoring his remonstrances, almost dragged him through the door by which he had entered.

“What sort of lunacy is it you are up to now, Jack?” the other was heard to grumble. “I'll bet ten to one you have been making an ass of yourself.”

“I dare say I have,” retorted Jack, good-naturedly; “a man who has not the faculty of making a fool of himself occasionally is only half a man. You would be a better fellow, too, Harry, if you were not so deucedly respectable; a slight admixture of folly would give tone and color to your demure and rigid propriety. For a man so splendidly equipped by fortune, you have made a poor job of existence, Harry. When I see you

bestowing your sullen patronage upon the great masterpieces of the past, I am ashamed of you—yes, by Jove, I am.”



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“Don’t you bother about me,” was the ungracious response of his comrade. “I cut my eye-teeth a good while before you did, even though you may be a few years older. I’ll take care of myself, you may depend upon it, and of you, too, if you get yourself into a scrape, which you seem bent upon doing.”

“Now, do be amiable, Harry,” urged the other with gentle persuasiveness. “I can’t take it upon my conscience to introduce you to a lady, and far less to a goddess, unless you promise to put on your best behavior. You know from your mythology that goddesses are capable of taking a terrible vengeance upon mortals who unwittingly offend them.”

Mr. John Cranbrook—for that was the name of the demonstrative tourist—was a small, neat-looking man, with an eager face and a pair of dark, vivid eyes. His features, though not in themselves handsome, were finely, almost tenderly, modelled. His nose was not of the classical type, but nevertheless of a clear and delicate cut, and his nostrils of extreme sensitiveness. On the whole, it was a pleasant, open, and enthusiastic face,—a face in which there was no guile. By the side of his robust and stalwart friend, Cranbrook looked almost frail, and it was evident that Vincent, who felt the advantages of his superior *avoirdufois*, was in the habit of patronizing him. They had been together in college and had struck up an accidental friendship, which, to their mutual surprise, had survived a number of misunderstandings, and even extended beyond graduation. Cranbrook, who was of a restless and impetuous temperament, found Vincent’s quiet self-confidence very refreshing; there was a massive repose about him, an unquestioning acceptance of the world as it was and an utter absence of intellectual effort, which afforded his friend a refuge from his own self-consuming ambition. Cranbrook had always prophesied that Harry would some day wake up and commit a grand and monumental piece of folly, but he hoped that that day was yet remote; at present it was his rich commonplaceness and his grave and comfortable dulness which made him the charming fellow he was, and it would be a pity to forfeit such rare qualities.

Cranbrook’s own accomplishments were not of the kind which is highly appreciated among undergraduates. His verses, which appeared anonymously in the weekly college paper, enjoyed much popularity in certain young ladies’ clubs, but were by the professor of rhetoric pronounced unsound in sentiment, though undeniably clever in expression. Vincent, on the other hand, had virtues which paved him an easy road to popularity; he could discuss base-ball and rowing matters with a gravity as if the fate of the republic depended upon them; he was moreover himself an excellent “catcher,” and subscribed liberally for the promotion of athletic sports. He did not, like his friend, care for “honors,” nor had he the slightest desire to excel in Greek; he always reflected the average undergraduate opinion



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on all college affairs, and was not above playing an occasional trick on a freshman or a professor. As for Cranbrook, he rather prided himself on being a little exceptional, and cherished with special fondness those of his tastes and proclivities which distinguished him from the average humanity. He had therefore no serious scruples in accepting Vincent's offer to pay his expenses for a year's trip abroad. Vincent, he reasoned, would hardly benefit much by his foreign experiences, if he went alone. His glance would never penetrate beneath the surface of things, and he therefore needed a companion, whose aesthetic culture was superior to his own. Cranbrook flattered himself that he was such a companion, and vowed in his heart to give Harry full returns in intellectual capital for what he expended on him in sordid metals. Moreover, Harry had a clear income of fifteen to twenty thousand a year, while he, Cranbrook, had scarcely anything which he could call his own. I dare say that if Vincent had known all the benevolent plans which his friend had formed for his mental improvement, he would have thought twice before engaging him as his travelling companion; but fortunately he was so well satisfied with his own mental condition, and so utterly unconscious of his short-comings in point of intellect, that he could not have treated an educational scheme of which he was himself to be the subject as anything but an amiable lunacy on Jack's part, or at the worst, as a practical joke. Jack was good company; that was with him the chief consideration; his madness was harmless and had the advantage of being entertaining; he was moreover at heart a good fellow, and the staunchest and most loyal of friends. Harry was often heard to express the most cheerful confidence in Jack's future; he would be sure to come out right in the end, as soon as he had cut his eye-teeth, and very likely Europe might be just the thing for a complaint like his.

## II.

After having marched over nearly half a mile of marble flag-stones, interrupted here and there by strips of precious mosaic, the two young men paused at the entrance to a long, vaulted corridor. White, silent gods stood gazing gravely from their niches in the wall, and the pale November sun was struggling feebly to penetrate through the dusty windows. It did not dispel the dusk, but gave it just the tenderest suffusion of sunshine.

"Stop," whispered Cranbrook. "I want you to take in the total impression of this scene before you examine the details. Only listen to this primeval stillness; feel, if you can, the stately monotony of this corridor, the divine repose and dignity of these marble forms, the chill immobility of this light. It seems to me that, if a full, majestic organ-tone could be architecturally expressed, it must of necessity assume a shape resembling the broad, cold masses of this aisle. I should call this an architectonic fugue,—a pure and lofty meditation—"



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“Now, do give us a rest, Jack,” interrupted Vincent mercilessly. “I thought you said something about a nymph or a goddess. Trot her out, if you please, and let me have a look at her.”

Cranbrook turned sharply about and gave his comrade a look of undisguised disgust.

“Harry,” he said gravely, “really you don’t deserve the good fortune of being in Italy. I thought I knew you well; but I am afraid I shall have to revise my judgment of you. You are hopelessly and incorrigibly frivolous. I know, it is ungracious in me to tell you so,—I, who have accepted your bounty; but, by Jove, Harry, I don’t want to buy my pleasure at the price you seem to demand. I have enough to get home, at all events, and I shall repay you what I owe you.”

Vincent colored to the edge of his hair; he bit his lip, and was about to yield to the first impulse of his wrath. A moment’s reflection, however, sobered him; he gave his leg two energetic cuts with his slender cane, then turned slowly on his heel and sauntered away. Cranbrook stood long gazing sadly after him; he would have liked to call him back, but the aimless, leisurely gait irritated him, and the word died on his lips. Every step seemed to hint a vague defiance. “What does it matter to me,” it seemed to say, “what you think of me? You are of too little account to have the power to ruffle my temper.” As the last echo of the retiring footsteps was lost in the great marble silence, Cranbrook heaved a sigh, and, suddenly remembering his errand, walked rapidly down the corridor. He paused before a round-arched, doorless portal, which led into a large sunny room. In the embrasure of one of the windows, a young girl was sitting, with a drawing-board in her lap, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of a marble relief which was suspended upon the wall. From where Cranbrook stood, he could see her noble profile clearly outlined against the white wall; a thick coil of black hair was wound about the back of her head, and a dark, tight-fitting dress fell in simple folds about her magnificent form. There was a simplicity and an unstudied grace in her attitude which appealed directly to Cranbrook’s aesthetic nature. Ever since he entered Italy he had been on the alert for romantic impressions, and his eager fancy instinctively lifted every commonplace incident that appeared to have poetic possibilities in it into the region of romance. He remembered having seen somewhere a statue of Clio whose features bore a remote resemblance to those of the young girl before him—the same massive, boldly sculptured chin, the same splendid, columnar throat, the same grave immobility of vision. It seemed sacrilege to approach such a divine creature with a trivial remark about the weather or the sights of Rome, and yet some commonplace was evidently required to pave the way to further acquaintance. Cranbrook pondered for a moment, and then advanced boldly toward the window where the goddess was sitting. She turned her head and flashed a pair of brilliant black eyes upon him.



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“Pardon me, signorina,” he said, with an apologetic cough. “I see you are drawing. Perhaps you could kindly tell me where one can obtain permission to copy in this gallery.”

“I do not know, signore,” she answered, in a low, rich voice. “No one ever copies here. The prince is never, here, and his major-domo comes only twice a year. He was here two weeks ago, so it will be a long time before he will return.”

“But you seem to be copying,” the young man ventured to remonstrate.

“Ah, *sanctissima!*” she cried, with a vivid gesture of deprecation. “No, signore, I am not copying. I am a poor, ignorant thing, signore, not an artist. There was once a kind foreigner who lodged with us; he was an artist, a most famous artist, and he amused himself with me while I was a child, and taught me to draw a little.”

“And perhaps you would kindly allow me to look at your drawing?”

Cranbrook was all in a flutter; he was amazed at his own temerity, but the situation filled him with a delicious sense of adventure, and an irresistible impulse within him urged him on. The girl had risen, and, without the slightest embarrassment or coquettish reluctance handed him her drawing-board. He saw at a glance that she was sincere in disclaiming the name of an artist. The drawing was a mere simple outline of a group, representing Briseis being led away from her lover by the messengers of Agamemnon. The king stood on one side ready to receive her, and on the other, Achilles, with averted face, in an attitude of deep dejection. The natural centre of the group, however, was the figure of Briseis. The poise of her classic head as she looked back over her shoulder at her beloved hero was full of the tenderest suggestions. She seemed to offer no resistance to the messengers, but her reluctant, lingering steps were more expressive than any violent demonstration. Cranbrook saw all this in the antique relief, but found it but feebly, and, as it were, stammeringly rendered in the girl's drawing. The lines were firmly and accurately traced and the proportions were approximately correct; but the deeper sentiment of the group had evidently escaped her, and the exquisite delicacy of modelling she had not even attempted to imitate. Cranbrook had in his heart to admit that he was disappointed. He feared that it was rude to return the board without a word of favorable comment, but he disdained to resort to any of those ingenious evasions which serve so conveniently as substitutes for definite judgments. The girl, in the meanwhile, stood looking into his face with an air of frank curiosity. It was not his opinion of her work, however, which puzzled her. She had never been accustomed to flattery, and had no idea of claiming a merit which she was well aware did not belong to her. She seemed rather to be wondering what manner of man her critic might be, and whether it would be safe to appeal to him for information on some subjects which lay beyond the reach of her own faculties.



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“Signore,” she began at last, a little hesitatingly, “I suppose you are a learned man who has read many books. Perhaps you know who that man is with the big helmet. And the maiden there with the bare feet, standing between the men—who is she? She looks sad, I think, and yet the large man who seems to be waiting for her is well made and handsome, and his garments appear to be precious. His shield is finely wrought, and I am sure he must be a man of great dignity.”

“You are right,” responded Cranbrook, to whom her guileless talk was highly entertaining.

“He is a king, and his name is Agamemnon. By nationality he is a Greek—”

“Ah, then I know why the girl is sad,” she interrupted, eagerly. “The Greeks are all thieves, Padre Gregorio says; they all steal and lie, and they are not of the true faith. The padre has been in the Greek land and he knows their bad ways.”

“The padre probably means the modern Greeks. I know very little about them. But the ancient Greeks were the noblest nation the world has ever seen.”

“Is it possible? And what did they do that was so great and noble? *Sanctissima!* the greatest nation the world has ever seen!”

These exclamations were uttered in a tone of sincere surprise which to Cranbrook was very amusing. The conversation was now fairly started. The American told with much expenditure of eloquence the story of “the wrath of Achilles, the son of Peleus,” and of the dire misfortunes which fell upon the house of Priamus and Atreus in consequence of one woman’s fatal beauty. The girl sat listening with a rapt, far-away expression; now and then a breeze of emotion flitted across her features and a tear glittered in her eye and coursed slowly down over her cheek. Cranbrook, too, as he was gradually tuned into sympathy with his own tale, felt a strange, shuddering intoxication of happiness. He did not perceive how the time slipped by; he began to shiver, and saw that the sun was gone. The girl woke up with a start as his voice ceased and looked about her with a bewildered air. They both rose and walked together through the long, empty halls and corridors. He noticed wonderingly that she carried a heavy bunch of keys in her hand and locked each door after they had passed through it. This then led to some personal explanations. He learned that her name was Annunciata, and that she was the daughter of Antonio Caesarelli, the gardener of the villa, who lived in the house with the *loggias* which he could see at the end of the steep plane tree avenue. If he would like to pick some oranges, there were plenty of them in the garden, and as the prince never asked for them, her father allowed her to eat as many as she liked. Would he not come and see her father? He was a very good and kind man. At present he was trimming the hedge up on the terrace.



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During this colloquy they had entered the garden, which seemed at first glance a great luxuriant wilderness. On the right hand of the gate was a huge jungle of blooming rose-bushes whose intertwined branches climbed the tall stuccoed wall, for the possession of which it struggled bravely with an equally ambitious and vigorous ivy. Enormous bearded cacti of fantastic forms spread their fat prickly leaves out over both sides of the pavement, leaving only a narrow aisle in the middle where locomotion was practicable. A long flight of green and slippery stone steps led up to a lofty terrace which was raised above the rest of the garden by a high wall, surmounted by a low marble balustrade. Here the palms spread their fan-like crowns against the blue sky, and the golden fruit shone among the dark leaves of the orange-trees. A large sculptured Triton with inflated cheeks blew a column of water high up into the air, and half a dozen dolphins, ridden by chubby water-sprites, spouted demurely along the edges of a wide marble basin. A noseless Roman senator stood at the top of the stairs, wrapping his mossy toga about him, with a splendid gesture, and the grave images of the Caesars, all time-stained and more or less seriously maimed, gazed forth with severe dignity from their green, leafy niches.

The upper garden showed signs of human supervision. A considerable area was occupied by flower-beds, laid out with geometrical regularity and stiffness; and the low box-wood hedges along their borders had a density and preciseness of outline which showed that they had been recently trimmed. Stone vases of magnificent design were placed at regular intervals along the balustrade; and in the middle projection of the terrace stood a hoary table with a broken porphyry plate, suggestive of coffee and old-time costumes, and the ponderous gossip of Roman grandees.

Cranbrook had walked for a while silently at Annunciata's side. He was deeply impressed with all he saw, and yet a dreamy sense of their unreality was gradually stealing over him. He imagined himself some wonderful personage in an Eastern fairy-tale, and felt for the moment as if he were moving in an animated chapter of the "Arabian Nights." He had had little hesitation in asking Annunciata questions about herself; they seemed both, somehow, raised above the petty etiquette of mundane intercourse. She had confessed to him with an unthinking directness which was extremely becoming to her, that her artistic aspirations which he had found so mysterious were utterly destitute of the ideal afflatus. She had, as a child, learned lace-making and embroidery, and had earned many a *lira* by adorning the precious vestments of archbishops and cardinals. She was now making a design for a tapestry, in which she meant to introduce the group from the antique relief. Her father allowed her to save all she earned for her dowry; because then, he said, she might be able to make a good match. This latter statement grated a little on Cranbrook's sensitive ears; but a glance at Annunciata's face soon reassured him. She had the air of stating a universally recognized fact concerning which she had never had occasion to reflect. She kept prattling away very much like a spoiled child, who is confident that its voice is pleasant, and its little experiences as absorbing to its listener as they are to itself.



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At length, by many devious paths, they reached a house on a sunny elevation, at the western extremity of the garden. It was a house such as one sees only in Rome,—a wide expanse of stuccoed wall with six or seven windows of different sizes scattered at random over its surface. Long tufts of fine grass depended from the gutters of the roof, and the plain pillars supporting the round arches of the *loggias* had a humid and weather-beaten look. The whole edifice, instead of asserting itself glaringly as a product of human art, blended with soft gradations into the surrounding landscape. Even the rude fresco of the Mother of Sorrows over the door was half overgrown with a greenish, semi-visible moss which allowed the original colors to shine faintly through, and the coarse lines of the dial in the middle of the wall were almost obliterated by sun and rain. But what especially attracted Cranbrook's attention was a card, hung out under one of the windows, upon which was written, with big, scrawling letters,—*"Appartamento Mobiliato d'Affitarsi."* He determined on the spot to become the occupant of this apartment whatever its deficiencies might be; therefore, without further delay, he introduced himself to Annunciata's mother, Monna Nina, as a *forestiero* in search of lodgings; and, after having gone through the formality of inspecting the room, he accepted Monna Nina's price and terms with an eagerness which made the excellent woman repent in her heart that she had not asked more.

The next day Cranbrook parted amicably from Vincent, who, it must be admitted, was beginning to have serious doubts of his sanity. They had had many a quarrel in days past, but Jack had always come to his senses again and been the first to make up. Vincent had the comfortable certainty of being himself always in the right, and it therefore never occurred to him that it might be his place to apologize. He had invariably accepted Jack's apologies good-naturedly and consented gracefully to let by-gones be by-gones, even though he were himself the offender; and the glow of conscious virtue which at such times pervaded him well rewarded him for his self-sacrifice. But this time, it seemed, Jack had taken some mysterious resolution, and his reason had hopelessly forsaken him. He even refused all offers of money, and talked about remaining in Rome and making his living by writing for the newspapers. He cherished no ill-will against Harry, he said, but had simply made up his mind that their tastes and temperaments were too dissimilar, and that they would both be happier if they parted company. They would see each other frequently and remain on friendly terms. No one was blamable for the separation, except Nature, who had made them so different. With these, and many similar assurances Cranbrook shook Vincent's hand and repaired to his new abode among the palms and cypresses. And yet his ears burned uncomfortably as he drove away in the *fiacre*. It was the first time he had been insincere to Harry, even by implication; but after what had happened, it was impossible to mention Annunciata's name.



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### III.

It was the afternoon of Christmas-day, six weeks after Cranbrook's arrival at the villa. The air was soft and balmy and the blooming rose-bushes under the windows sent up from time to time delicious whiffs of fragrance. The sky was strangely clear, and long, cool vistas opened to the sight among the cloud-banks that hung over the tops of the Alban Mountains. Cranbrook was sitting out on the *loggia* reading the scene in the *Odyssey* where the shipwrecked Ulysses steps out from the copse where he has been sleeping and interrupts the ball-play of Nausicaa and her maidens. How pure and sweet the air that breathed from these pages! What a noble and dignified maiden was this Nausicaa! At this moment the merry voice of Annunciata was heard in the garden below. The young man let his book drop and leaned out over the wall. There she stood, tall and stately, receiving, with the manner of a good-natured empress, a white-haired priest who came waddling briskly toward her.

"*Bona festa*, Padre Gregorio," she cried, seizing the old man's hand. "Mother is going to have macaroni for supper and she was just going to send Pietro after you. For you know you promised to be with us this blessed day."

"*Bona festa*, child," responded the priest, smiling all over his large, benevolent face. "Padre Gregorio never forgets his promises, and least of all on a holy Christmas-day."

"No, I knew you would not forget us, padre; but you are all out of breath. You have been mounting the stairs to the terrace again instead of going round by the vineyard. Come and sit down here in the sun, for I wish to speak to you about something important."

And she led the priest by the hand to a stone bench by the door and seated herself at his side.

"Padre," she began, with a great earnestness in her manner, "is it true that the Holy Virgin hates heretics and that they can never go to heaven?"

The good padre was evidently not prepared for such a question. He gazed at Annunciata for a moment in helpless bewilderment, then coughed in his red bandanna handkerchief, took a deliberate pinch of snuff and began:

"The Holy Virgin is gracious, child, and she hates no one. But little girls should not trouble their heads with things that do not concern them."

"But this does concern me, padre," retorted the girl eagerly. "I went this morning with Signore Giovanni, the stranger who is lodging with us,—for he is a very good and kind man, padre; I went with him to the Aracoeli to see the blessed Bambino and the shepherds and the Holy Virgin. But he did not kneel, and when I told him of the



wonderful things which the Bambino had done, he would not believe me, padre, and he even once laughed in my face.”

“Then he is not a good man,” said the padre emphatically, “and he will not go to heaven, unless he changes his faith and his conduct before God takes him away.”



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Cranbrook, who had made several vain attempts to call attention to his presence, now rose and through the window re-entered his room. The snatch of the conversation which he had overheard had made him uneasy and had spoiled his happy Homeric mood. He was only too willing to put the most flattering construction upon Annunciata's solicitude for his fate in the hereafter, but he had to admit to himself, that there was something in her tone and in the frank directness of her manner which precluded such an interpretation. He had floated along, as it were, in a state of delicious semi-consciousness during the six weeks since he first entered this house. He had established himself firmly, as he believed, in the favor of every member of the family, from Antonio himself to the two-year-old baby, Babetta, who spent her days contentedly in running from one end to the other of a large marble sarcophagus, situated under a tall stone pine, a dozen steps from the house. Monna Nina could then keep watch over her from the window while at work, and the high, sculptured sides of the sarcophagus prevented Babetta from indulging her propensity for running away. Pietro, a picturesque vagabond of twelve, who sold patriotic match-boxes with the portraits of Garibaldi and Vittorio Emanuele, had been bribed into the staunchest partisanship for the foreigner by a ticket to the monkey theatre in the Piazza delle Terme, and had excited his sister's curiosity to a painful pitch by his vivid descriptions of the wonderful performance he had witnessed. Antonio, who was a quiet and laborious man, listened with devout attention to Cranbrook's accounts of the foreign countries he had visited, while Monna Nina sometimes betrayed an invincible scepticism regarding facts which belonged to the A B C of transatlantic existence, and unhesitatingly acquiesced in statements which to an Italian mind might be supposed to border on the miraculous. She would not believe, for instance, that hot and cold water could be conducted through pipes to the fifth and sixth story of a house and drawn *ad libitum* by the turning of a crank; but her lodger's descriptions of the travelling palaces in which you slept and had your dinner prepared while speeding at a furious rate across the continent, were listened to with the liveliest interest and without the slightest misgiving. She had, moreover, well-settled convictions of her own concerning a number of things which lay beyond Cranbrook's horizon. She had a great dread of the evil eye and knew exactly what remedies to apply in order to counteract its direful effects; she wore around her neck a charm which had been blessed by the pope and which was a sure preventive of rheumatism; and under the ceiling of her kitchen were suspended bunches of medicinal herbs which had all been gathered during the new moon and which, in certain decoctions, were warranted to cure nearly all the ailments to which flesh is heir.



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To Cranbrook the daily companionship with these kind-hearted, primitive people had been a most refreshing experience. As he wrote to a friend at home, he had shaken off the unwholesome dust which had accumulated upon his soul, and had for the first time in his life breathed the undiluted air of healthful human intercourse. Annunciata was to him a living poem, a simple and stately epic, whose continuation from day to day filled his life with sonorous echoes. She was a modern Nausicaa, with the same child-like grandeur and unconscious dignity as her Homeric prototype. It was not until to-day that he had become aware of the distance which separated him from her. They had visited together the church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, where a crude tableau of the Nativity of Christ is exhibited during Christmas week. Her devoutness in the presence of the jewelled doll, representing the infant Saviour, had made a painful impression upon him, and when, with the evident intention of compelling his reverence, she had told him of the miracles performed by the "Bambino," he had only responded with an incredulous smile. She had sent him a long, reproachful glance; then, as the tears rose to her eyes, she had hurried away and he had not dared to follow her.

While pursuing these sombre meditations, Cranbrook was seated—or rather buried—in a deep Roman easy-chair, whose faded tapestries would have been esteemed a precious find by a relic-hunter. Judging by the *baroque* style of its decorations, its tarnished gilding, and its general air *à la* Pompadour, it was evident that it had spent its youthful days in some princely palace of the last century, and had by slow and gradual stages descended to its present lowly condition. A curious sense of the evanescence of all earthly things stole over the young man's mind, as his thoughts wandered from his own fortunes to those of the venerable piece of furniture which was holding him in its ample embrace. What did it matter in the end, he reasoned, whether he married his Nausicaa or not? To marry a Nausicaa with grace was a feat for the performance of which exceptional qualities were required. The conjugal complement to a Nausicaa must be a man of ponderous presence and statuesque demeanor—not a shrill and nervous modern like himself, with second-rate physique, and a morbidly active intellect. No, it mattered little what he did or left undone. The world would be no better and no worse for anything he could do. Very likely, in the arms of this chair where he was now sitting, a dozen Roman Romeos, in powdered wigs and silk stockings, had pined for twice that number of Roman Juliets; and now they were all dust, and the world was moving on exactly as before. And yet in the depth of his being there was a voice which protested against this hollow reasoning; he felt to himself insincere and hypocritical; he dallied and played with his own emotions. Every mood carried in itself a sub-consciousness of its transitoriness.



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The daylight had faded, and the first faint flush of the invisible moon was pervading the air. The undulating ridge of the Sabine mountains stood softly denuded against the horizon, and here and there a great, flat-topped stone pine was seen looming up along the edges of the landscape. Cranbrook ate hurriedly the frugal dinner which was served him from a neighboring *trattoria*, then lighted a cigar, and walked out into the garden. He sat for a while on the balustrade of the terrace, looking out over the green campagna, over which the moon now rose large and red, while the towers and domes of the city stood, dark and solemn, in the foreground. The bells of Santa Maria Maggiore were tolling slowly and pensively, and the sound lingered with long vibrations in the still air. A mighty, shapeless longing, remotely aroused or intensified by the sound of the bells, shook his soul; and the glorious sight before him seemed to weigh upon him like an oppressive burden. “Annunciata,” came in heavy, rhythmic pulses through the air; it was impossible not to hear it. The bells were tolling her name: “Annun-ciata, Annun-ciata.” Even the water that was blown from the Triton’s mouth whispered softly, as it fell, “Annunciata, Annunciata.”

Cranbrook was awakened from his reverie by the sound of approaching footsteps. He turned his head and recognized, by the conspicuous shovel-hat, the old priest who had prophesied such a cheerful future for him in the hereafter. And was that not Annunciata who was walking at his side? Surely, that was her voice; for what voice was there in all the world with such a rich, alluring cadence? And that firm and splendidly unconscious walk—who, with less than five generations’ practice could even remotely imitate it? Beloved Annunciata! Wondrous and glorious Annunciata! In thy humble disguise thou art nevertheless a goddess, and thy majestic simplicity shames the shrill and artificial graces of thy sisters of the so-called good society. But surely, child, thou art agitated. Do not waste those magnificent gestures on the aged and callous priest!

“Thou art hard-hearted and cruel, Padre Gregorio!” were the words that reached Cranbrook’s ears. “The Holy Virgin would not allow any one to suffer forever who is good and kind. How could he help that his father and his mother were not of the right faith?”

The padre’s answer he could not distinguish; he heard only an eager murmur and some detached words, from which he concluded that the priest was expostulating earnestly with her. They passed down the long staircase into the lower garden, and, though their forms remained visible, their voices were soon lost among the whispering leaves and the plashing waters. Cranbrook followed them steadily with his eyes, and a thrill of ineffable joy rippled through his frame. He had at last, he thought, the assurance for which he had yearned so long. Presently he saw Annunciata stop, plunge her hands into a side-pocket, and pull

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out something which he imagined to be a key; then she and the padre disappeared for a few moments in the gloom of a deep portal, and when Annunciata re-appeared she was alone. She walked rapidly back through the garden, without being apparently in the least impressed by the splendor of the night, mounted the stairs to the terrace, and again passed within a dozen yards of where Cranbrook was sitting, without observing him.

“Annunciata,” he called softly, rising to follow her.

“Signore Giovanni,” she exclaimed wonderingly but without the slightest trace of the emotion which had so recently agitated her. “You should not sit here in the garden so late. The air of the night is not good for the foreigner.”

“The air is good for me wherever you are, Annunciata,” he answered warmly. “Come and walk with me here down the long plane tree avenue. Take my arm. I have much to say to you:

’\* \* \* In such a night as this,  
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,’ *etc.*  
’In such a night,  
Troilus, methinks, mounter! the Trojan walls,  
And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents  
Where Cressid lay that night.’”

She took the arm which he offered her silently, but with a simple dignity which a princess might have envied her.

“I cannot stay out long,” she said. “My mother would miss me.”

“I shall not detain you long. I have only a confession to make to you. I was sitting on the *loggia* this afternoon when Padre Gregorio came, and I heard what you said to him.”

He had expected her to blush or show some sign of embarrassment. But she only lifted her calm, clear countenance toward him and said:

“You were kinder and better than all the men I had known, and it gave me trouble to think that you should be unhappy when you die. Therefore I asked the padre; but I do not believe any more that the padre is always right. God is better and wiser than he, and God will find a way where a priest would find none.”

There was something inexpressibly touching in the way she uttered these simple words. Cranbrook, although he was, for reasons of his own, disappointed at her perfect composure, felt the tears mounting to his eyes, and his voice shook as he answered:



“I am not afraid of my lot in the next world, Annunciata; and although it is kind of you to be troubled about it, I fear you can do nothing to improve it. But my fate in this world I yearn to lay in your hands. I love you very dearly, Annunciata, and all I need to make me what I aspire to be is to have you give me a little affection in return. What do you say, Annunciata? do you think you could? Would you be my wife, and go with me to my own country and share my life, whatever it may be.”

“But signore,” she replied, after a moment’s deliberation; “my mother would not like it, and Babetta would cry the whole day long when I was gone.”



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"I am speaking seriously, Annunciata, and you must not evade my question. It all depends upon you."

"No, it also depends upon mother and Babetta. But I know you would be good and kind to me, Signore Giovanni, and you would always treat me well; for you are a good and kind man. I should like to be your wife, I think, but I do not know whether I should like to go with you across the great sea."

Cranbrook was hopelessly perplexed, and for an instant even inclined to question whether she might not be ridiculing him; but a glance at her puzzled face showed him that she was grappling earnestly with the great problem, and apparently endeavoring to gain time by uttering the first thought that suggested itself to her mind. The gloom of the plane-trees now enveloped them, and only here and there a quivering ray of moonlight pierced through the dense roof of leaves. The marble phantoms of the Caesars gazed sternly at the daring intruders who had come to disturb their centuries' repose, and the Roman senator at the end of the avenue held his outstretched hand toward them, as if warning them back from the life that lay beyond the moment's great resolution. And yet, before the moon had faded out of the sky, the great resolution was irrevocably taken. When they parted in the hall, leading up to Cranbrook's room, Annunciata consented with the faintest show of resistance to being kissed, and she even responded, though vaguely and doubtingly, to his vehement caresses. "*Felicissima notte*, Signore Giovanni," she murmured, as she slowly disengaged herself from his embrace. "You are a dear, good man, and I will go with you across the great sea."

### IV.

Since their first parting, Vincent and Cranbrook had seen little of each other. They had met occasionally in the Vatican galleries, in the palace of the Caesars, and on the Monte Pincio, and had then stopped to shake hands and to exchange a few friendly inquiries, but Cranbrook, for a reason which he strove hard to embellish, had hitherto refrained from inviting Harry to visit him in his dwelling. The latter had of course noticed this omission, but had attributed it to a very pardonable desire on Jack's part to keep him in ignorance as to the real state of his finances. "He is probably living in some cheap hovel," he thought, "and he is too proud to wish me to know it. But he needn't be afraid of my intruding upon his privacy until he himself opens his door to me." Unfortunately for both, Harry was not destined to carry out this amiable intention. A hostile fate led him to encroach upon his friend's territory when he was least suspecting it.

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It was a sunny day early in February. Antonio Caesarelli had saddled an uncommonly hoary and wise-looking donkey, named Abraham, and, as was his wont every Saturday, had repaired with it to the Piazza del Fiori, where he sold *broccoli* and other vegetables of the cabbage species. About noon, Annunciata came to bring him his dinner, and after having enjoyed for a while the sensation she made among the cabbage-dealers, betook herself on a journey of exploration through the city. Pietro's tale of the miracles performed at the monkey theatre had given a lively impetus to her imagination, and being unable to endure any longer his irritating airs of superior knowledge, she had formed the daring resolution to put his veracity to the test. She arrived quite breathless in the Piazza delle Terme, and with much flutter and palpitation inquired the price of a ticket. The door-keeper paused in his stentorian address to the multitude that was gathered about him, and informed her that ten soldi would admit her to the enchanted realm within. Poor Annunciata's countenance fell; she pulled her seven soldi from her pocket, counted them three or four times deliberately in her hand, and cast appealing glances at the stony-hearted Cerberus. At this moment she discovered a handsome young gentleman who, with his eyes fixed on her face, was elbowing his way through the crowd.

"Come along, my pretty lass," he said, in doubtful Italian. "Put those coppers in your pocket and let me get your ticket for you."

Annunciata was well aware that it was a dangerous thing to accept favors from unknown gentlemen, but just then her conscience refused to assert itself. Nevertheless, she summoned courage to answer, though in a voice which betrayed inward wavering:

"No, I thank you, signore; I would rather not."

"Oh, stuff, my child! I won't harm you, and your mother need never know."

He seized her gently by the arm and pointed toward the canvas door which was drawn aside to admit another spectator. A gorgeously attired monkey, riding on a poodle, became visible for an instant through the aperture. That was too much for Annunciata's conscience.

"But really, signore, I ought not!" she murmured, feebly.

"But we all do so many things that we ought not to do," answered he, with a brusque laugh. "However, I won't bite you; you needn't be afraid of me."

And before she knew it he had pushed her in through the door, and she found herself standing in a large tent, with long circular rows of benches which rose amphitheatrically from the arena toward the canvas walls. It was not quite to her taste that he conducted her to a seat near the roof, but she did not feel at liberty to remonstrate. She sat staring rigidly at the performances of the poodles and the monkeys, which were, no doubt, very

wonderful, but which, somehow, failed to impress her as such, for she felt all the while that the gentleman at her side was regarding



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her with unaverted gaze. The thought of Signore Giovanni shot through her mind, and she feared she should never dare to look into his honest eyes again. Her heart kept hammering against her side, her blood burned in her cheeks, and she felt guilty and miserable. And yet she saw, in a sort of blind and unconscious way, that her escort was a very dazzling phenomenon, and in external finish much superior to her plain and unassuming lover. Gradually, as she accustomed herself to her novel situation, she began to bestow her furtive admiration upon the various ornaments which he carried about his person in the shape of scarf-pin and sleeve-buttons, and she also found time to observe that his linen and his handkerchief were immaculate and of exceeding fineness. The *tout ensemble* of his personality made the impression of costliness which, to her unsophisticated soul, was synonymous with high birth and an exalted social position.

"If only Signore Giovanni would dress like that," she thought, "how much more I should love him!"

That was a very disloyal thought, and her conscience immediately smote her. She arose, thanked her companion tremulously for his kindness, and hastened toward the door. When she was once more under the open sky, she drew a full breath of relief, and then hurried away as if the earth burned under her feet. It was nearly five o'clock when she reached the garden-gate of the villa; she paused for a moment to collect her thoughts, to arrange her excuses, and to prepare for the scolding which she knew was in store for her. She was just about to turn the key when, to her horror, she saw her unknown companion stepping out of a *fiacre*, and fearlessly approaching her.

"Surely, child, you didn't imagine you could run away from me in that style," he said smilingly. "Our acquaintance is not to come to such an untimely end. You must tell me your name, and, I was going to say, where you live, but that key will relieve you from the latter necessity. But, in order to prove to you that I am an honest fellow and mean no harm to you, here is my card. My name is Henry Vincent, I am an American, and—and—I should like to meet you again, if you have no objection."

Annunciata was now seriously alarmed.

"Signore," she faltered, "I am an honest girl, and you must not speak to me thus."

"By Jove! So am I an honest fellow, and no one need be ashamed of my acquaintance. If you had anything to fear from me, do you suppose I would offer you my card, and give you my name? But I *must* meet you again; if you don't give me the opportunity, I shall make my opportunity myself, and that might get you into a scrape and be unpleasant for both of us. Well, what do you say?"



The young girl stood for a while pondering. Her first impulse was to cut short the interview by mentioning Cranbrook's name and revealing her own relation to him. She had an idea that Cranbrook was a sort of national character and that all Americans must have heard of him. A second glance at Vincent's splendid attire, however, turned the scale in his favor.



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“About noon next Saturday,” she said, scarcely audibly, “I shall be in the Piazza del Fiori. My father will be there, too.”

With a swift movement she tore the garden-gate open, slammed it behind her and ran up the path toward the terrace.

### V.

March, the very name of which makes a New Englander shiver, is a glorious month in Rome. Then a warmer tone steals into the sky, the clouds become airier and more buoyant in color and outline, and the Sabine Mountains display, with the varying moods of the day, tints of the most exquisite softness and delicacy. Cranbrook, from his lofty hermitage, had an excellent opportunity to observe this ever-changing panorama of earth and sky; but it had lost its charm to him. The long, cool vistas between the cloud-banks no more lifted the mind above itself, pointing the way into a great and glorious future. A vague dread was perpetually haunting him; he feared that Annunciata did not love him as he wished to be loved; that she regretted, perhaps, having bound herself to him and was not unwilling to break loose from him. But what was life to him without Annunciata? He must bide his time, and by daily kindness teach her to love him. That she was not happy might have other causes, unknown to him. Her vehement self-accusations and tearful protestations that she was not true to him might be merely the manifestations of a morbidly sensitive conscience.

Vincent in the meanwhile had changed his attitude completely toward the old masters. After his first meeting with Annunciata, his artistic sense had been singularly quickened. He might be seen almost daily wending his way, with a red-covered Baedeker under his arm, to the gate of a certain villa, where he would breathe the musty air of the deserted gallery for hours together, gaze abstractedly out of the windows, and sometimes, when he was observed, even make a pretence of sketching. Usually it was Monna Nina or Pietro who came to open the gate for him on such occasions, but, at rare intervals, it happened that Annunciata was sent to be his cicerone. She always met him with fear and trembling, but so irresistible was the fascination which he exerted over her, that he seemed to be able to change her mood at will. When he greeted her with his lazy smile her heart gave a great thump, and she laughed responsively, almost in spite of herself. If he scowled, which he was sometimes pleased to do when Monna Nina or Pietro had taken her place for several successive days, she looked apprehensive and inquired about his health. The costly presents of jewelry which he had given her, she hid guiltily in the most secret drawer of her chest, and then sat up late into the night and rejoiced and wept over them.



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As for Vincent, it must be admitted that his own infatuation was no less complete. He had a feeling as if some new force had entered his life and filled it with a great, though dimly apprehended, meaning. His thought had gained a sweep and a width of wing which were a perpetual surprise to him. Not that he reasoned much about it if he only felt strong and young and mightily aroused. He had firmly resolved to make Annunciata his wife, and he was utterly at a loss, and even secretly irritated at her reluctance to have their relation revealed to her parents. He could brook no obstacle in his march of conquest, and was constantly chafing at the necessity of concealment. He had frequently thought of anticipating Annunciata's decision, by presenting himself to her parents as a Croesus from beyond the sea, who entertained the laudable intention of marrying their fair daughter; but somehow the character of Cophetua was ridiculously melodramatic, and Annunciata, with her imperial air, would have made a poor job of the beggar-maid.

It was on the tenth of March, 186—, a memorable date in the lives of the three persons concerned in this narrative. Cranbrook had just finished a semi-aesthetic and semi-political letter to a transatlantic journal, in which he figured twice a month as "our own correspondent." It was already late in the night; but the excitement of writing had made him abnormally wakeful, and knowing that it was of no use to go to bed, he blew out his lamp, lit a cigar and walked out upon the *loggia*. There was a warm and fitful spring wind blowing, and the unceasing rustling of the ilex leaves seemed cool and soothing to his hot and overwrought senses. In the upper strata of the air, a stronger gale was chasing dense masses and torn shreds of cloud with a fierce speed before the lunar crescent; and the broad terrace beyond the trees was alternately illuminated and plunged in gloom. In one of these sudden illuminations, Cranbrook thought he saw a man leaning against the marble balustrade; something appeared to be unwinding itself slowly from his arms, and presently there stood a woman at his side. Then the moon vanished behind a cloud, and all was darkness. Cranbrook began to tremble; a strange numbness stole over him. He stood for a while motionless, then lifted his hand to his forehead; but he hardly felt its touch; he only felt that it was cold and wet. Several minutes passed; a damp gust of wind swept through the tree-tops and a night-hawk screamed somewhere in the darkness. Presently the moon sailed out into the blue space, and he saw again the two figures locked in a close embrace. The wind bore toward him a dear familiar voice which sounded tender and appealing; his blood swept like fire through his veins. Hardly knowing what he did, he leaped down the stairs which led from the *loggia* into the court rushed through the garden toward the terrace, grappled for a moment with somebody, thrust against something hard which suddenly yielded, and then fell down—down into a deep and dark abyss.



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When he awoke he felt a pair of cold hands fumbling with his shirt-collar; trees were all about him and the blue moonlit sky above him. He arose, not without difficulty, and recognized Annunciata's face close to his; she looked frightened and strove to avoid his glance.

"The Holy Virgin be praised, Signore Giovanni!" she whispered. "But Signore Enrico, he seems to be badly hurt."

He suddenly remembered what had happened; but he could bring forth no sound; he had a choking sensation in his throat and his lips seemed numb and lifeless. He saw Annunciata stooping down over a form that lay outstretched on the ground, but the sight of her was repulsive to him and he turned away.

"Help me, Signore Giovanni," she begged in a hoarse whisper. "He may be dead and there is no one to help him."

Half mechanically he stooped down—gracious heavens! It was Vincent! In an instant all his anger and misery were forgotten.

"Hurry, Annunciata," he cried; "run for a doctor. Great God! what have you done?"

## VI.

Six weeks later two young Americans were sitting on the deck of the Cunarder *Siberia*, which had that morning left the Queenstown harbor.

"Jack," said the one, laying his hand on the other's shoulder in a way that expressed an untold amount of friendliness, "I don't think it is good policy to keep silence any longer. I know I have committed my monumental piece of folly, as you prophesied, but I need hardly tell you, Jack, that I didn't know at the time what—what I know now," he finished, hurriedly.

"I never doubted that, Harry," answered the other with a certain solemn impressiveness. "But don't let us talk. I have not reached the stage yet when I can mention her name without a pang; and I fear—I fear I never shall."

They sat for a long while smoking in silence and gazing pensively toward the dim coast-line of Europe, which was gradually fading away upon the eastern horizon.

"Jack," began Vincent abruptly, "I feel as if I had passed through a severe illness."

"So you have, Harry," retorted Cranbrook.



“Oh, pshaw! I don’t mean that. That little physical suffering was nothing more than I deserved. But a fever, they say, sometimes purifies the blood, and mine, I think, has left me a cleaner and a wiser fellow than it found me.”

The steamer kept ploughing its broad pathway of foam through the billows; a huge cloud of fantastic shape loomed up in the east, and the vanishing land blended with and melted away among its fleecy embankments.

“Are you perfectly sure, Jack,” said Vincent, throwing the burning stump of his cigar over the gunwale, “that the experiences of the past year have not been all an excursion into the ‘Arabian Nights’? If it were not for that fine marble relief in my trunk which I bought of that miserable buffoon in the Via Sistina, I should easily persuade myself that the actual world were bounded on the east by the Atlantic and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. I was just considering whether I should try to smuggle it through the custom-house, or whether, perhaps, it would be wiser to give Uncle Sam his due.”



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“And what does the relief represent?” asked Cranbrook, half indifferently.

“It is a copy from an antique one. Agamemnon robbing Achilles of his—”

Cranbrook gave a start, and walked rapidly toward the other end of the boat. In half an hour he returned, stopped in front of Vincent, grasped his hand warmly and said:

“Harry, let us agree never to refer to that which is passed. In your life it was an episode, in mine it was a catastrophe.”

Since that day, Annunciata’s name has never passed their lips.

There is, however, an epilogue to this tale which cannot well be left untold. In the winter of 187-, ten years after their first Italian sojourn, the two friends again visited Rome together. One beautiful day in February, they found themselves, perhaps not quite by accident, in the neighborhood of the well-remembered villa. They rang the bell at the garden gate and were admitted by a robust young man who seemed to be lounging among the overgrown hedges in some official capacity. The mossy Triton was still prosecuting his thankless task in the midst of his marble basin; the long stairs to the terrace were yet as damp and slippery as of old, and the noseless Roman senator was still persevering in his majestic attitude, although a sprig of maiden-hair was supporting its slender existence in the recess of his countenance which had once been occupied by his stately nose. Vincent and Cranbrook both regarded these familiar objects with peculiar emotions, but faithful to their agreement, they made no comment. At last they stopped before the sarcophagus—and verily Babetta was still there. A clean and chubby-faced Italian baby with large black eyes rose out of its marble depth and hailed them with simple, inarticulate delight. Cranbrook gazed long at the child, then lifted it up in his arms and kissed it. The young man who had opened the gate for them stood by observing the scene with a doubtful expression of suspicion and wonder. As the stranger again deposited the child on the blanket in the bottom of the sarcophagus, he stepped up before the door and called:

“Annunciata!”

A tall, comely matron appeared in the door—and the strangers hastened away.

## UNDER THE GLACIER.

### I.

In one of the deepest fjord-valleys on the western coast of Norway there lives, even to this day, a legend which may be worth relating. Several hundred years ago, a peasant dwelt there in the parish who had two sons, both born on the same day. During their



infancy they looked so much alike that even the father himself could not always tell one from the other; and as the mother had died soon after their birth, there was no one to settle the question of primogeniture. At last the father, too, died, and each son, feeling sure that he was the elder, laid claim to the farm. For well nigh a year they



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kept wrangling and fighting, each threatening to burn the house over the other's head if he dared to take possession of it. The matter was finally adjusted by the opportune intervention of a neighbor who stood in high repute for wisdom. At his suggestion, they should each plant side by side a twig or sprout of some tree or herb, and he to whose plant God gave growth should be the owner of the farm. This advice was accepted; for God, both thought, was a safer arbiter than man. One of the brothers, Arne, chose a fern (*Ormgrass*), and the other, Ulf, a sweet-brier. A week later, they went with the wise man and two other neighbors to the remote pasture at the edge of the glacier where, by common consent, they had made their appeal to the judgment of heaven. Arne's fern stood waving in dewy freshness in the morning breeze; but Ulf's sweet-brier lay prostrate upon the ground, as if uprooted by some hostile hand. The eyes of the brothers met in a long, ill-boding glance.

"This is not heaven's judgment," muttered Ulf, under his breath. "Methinks I know the hand that has wrought this dastardly deed."

The umpires, unmindful of the charge, examined the uprooted twig, and decided that some wild animal must have trodden upon it. Accordingly they awarded the farm to Arne. Then swifter than thought Ulf's knife flew from its sheath; Arne turned pale as death and quivered like an aspen leaf. The umpires rushed forward to shield him. There was a moment of breathless suspense. Then Ulf with a wild shout hurled his knife away, and leaped over the brink of the precipice down into the icy gulf below. A remote hollow rumbling rose from the abyss, followed by a deeper stillness. The men peered out over the edge of the rock; the glacier lay vast and serene, with its cold, glittering surface glaring against the sky, and a thousand minute rivulets filled the air with their melodious tinkling.

"God be his judge and yours," said the men to Arne, and hastened away.

From that day Arne received the surname *Ormgrass* (literally *Wormgrass*, *Fern*), and his farm was called the *Ormgrass* farm. And the name has clung to his descendants until this day. Somehow, since the death of Ulf, the family had never been well liked, and in their proud seclusion, up under the eternal ice-fields, they sought their neighbors even less than they were themselves sought. They were indeed a remarkably handsome race, of a light build, with well-knit frames, and with a touch of that wild grace which makes a beast of prey seem beautiful and dangerous.

In the beginning of the present century Arne's grandson, Gudmund *Ormgrass*, was the bearer of the family name and the possessor of the estate. As ill luck would have it, his two sons, Arne and Tharald, both wooed the same maiden,—the fairest and proudest maiden in all the parish. After long wavering she at last was betrothed to Arne, as some thought, because he, being the elder, was the heir to the farm. But in less than a year,

some two weeks before the wedding was to be, she bore a child; and Arne was not its father.



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That same night the brothers met in an evil hour; from words they came to blows, knives were drawn, and after midnight Tharald was carried up to the farm with a deep wound in his shoulder and quite unconscious. He hovered for a week on the brink of death; then the wound began to heal and he recovered rapidly. Arne was nowhere to be found; rumor reported that he had been seen the day after the affray, on board a brig bound for Hull with lumber. At the end of a year Tharald married his brother's bride and took possession of the farm.

## II.

One morning in the early summer of 1868, some thirty-five years after the events just related, the fjord valley under the glacier was startled by three shrill shrieks from the passing steamer, the usual signal that a boat was wanted to land some stray passenger. A couple of boats were pushed out from the beach, and half a dozen men, with red-peaked caps and a certain picturesque nonchalance in their attire, scrambled into them and soon surrounded the gangway of the steamer. First some large trunks and boxes were lowered, showing that the passenger, whoever he might be, was a person of distinction,—an impression which was still further confirmed by the appearance of a tall, dark-skinned man, followed by a woolly-headed creature of a truly Satanic complexion, who created a profound sensation among the boatmen. Then the steamer shrieked once more, the echoes began a prolonged game of hide-and-seek among the snow-hooded peaks, and the boats slowly ploughed their way over the luminous mirror of fjord.

"Is there any farm here, where my servant and myself can find lodgings for the summer?" said the traveller, turning to a young peasant lad. "I should prefer to be as near to the glacier as possible."

He spoke Norwegian, with a strong foreign accent, but nevertheless with a correct and distinct enunciation.

"My father, Tharald Ormgrass, lives close up to the ice-field," answered the lad. "I shouldn't wonder if he would take you, if you will put up with our way of living."

"Will you accompany me to your father's house?"

"Yes, I guess I can do that." (*Ja, jeg kan nok det.*)

The lad, without waiting for further summons, trotted ahead, and the traveller with his black servant followed.

Maurice Fern (for that was the stranger's name) was, as already hinted, a tall, dark-complexioned man, as yet slightly on the sunny side of thirty, with a straight nose, firm, shapely mouth, which was neither sensual nor over-sensitive, and a pair of clear dark-

brown eyes, in which there was a gleam of fervor, showing that he was not altogether incapable of enthusiasm. But for all that, the total impression of his personality was one of clear-headed decision and calm energy. He was a man of an absorbing presence, one whom you would have instinctively noticed even in a crowd.



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He bore himself with that unconscious grace which people are apt to call aristocratic, being apparently never encumbered by any superfluity of arms and legs. His features, whatever their ethnological value might be, were, at all events, decidedly handsome; but if they were typical of anything, they told unmistakably that their possessor was a man of culture. They showed none of that barbaric frankness which, like a manufacturer's label, flaunts in the face of all humanity the history of one's origin, race, and nationality. Culture is hostile to type; it humanizes the ferocious jaw-bones of the Celt, blanches the ruddy lustre of the Anglo-Saxon complexion, contracts the abdominal volume of the Teuton, and subdues the extravagant angularities of Brother Jonathan's stature and character. Although respecting this physiognomic reticence on the part of Mr. Fern, we dare not leave the reader in ignorance regarding the circumstances of which he was the unconscious result.

After his flight from Norway, Arne Ormgrass had roamed about for several months as "a wanderer and a vagabond upon the earth," until, finally, he settled down in New Orleans, where he entered into partnership with a thrifty young Swede, and established a hotel, known as the "Sailors' Valhalla." Fortune favored him: his reckless daring, his ready tongue, and, above all, his extraordinary beauty soon gained him an enviable reputation. Money became abundant, the hotel was torn down and rebuilt with the usual barbaric display of mirrors and upholstery, and the landlords began to aspire for guests of a higher degree. Then, one fine day, a young lady, with a long French name and aristocratic antecedents, fell in love with Arne, not coolly and prudently, as northern damsels do, but with wildly tragic gesticulations and a declamatory ardor that were superb to behold. To the Norseman, however, a passion of this degree of intensity was too novel to be altogether pleasing; he felt awed and bewildered,—standing, as he did, for the first time in his life in the presence of a veritable mystery. By some chance their clandestine meetings were discovered. The lady's brother shot at Arne, who returned the shot with better effect; then followed elopement—marriage—return to the bosom of the family, and a final grand tableau with parental blessing and reconciliation.

From that time forth, Arne Fern, as he was called (his Norse name having simply been translated into English), was a man of distinction. After the death of his father-in-law, in 1859, he sold his Louisiana property and emigrated with his wife and three children to San Francisco, where by successful real-estate investments he greatly increased his wealth. His eldest son, Maurice, was, at his own request, sent to the Eastern States, where educational advantages were greater; he entered, in due time, one of the best and oldest universities, and, to the great disappointment of his father, contracted a violent enthusiasm for natural science. Being convinced, however, that remonstrance was vain, the old gentleman gradually learned to look with a certain vague respect upon his son's enigmatical pursuits, and at last surprised the latter by "coming down quite handsomely" when funds were required for a geological excursion to Norway.



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### III.

A scientific enthusiasm is one of the most uncomfortable things a human bosom can harbor. It may be the source of a good deal of private satisfaction to the devotee, but it makes him, in his own estimation, superior to all the minor claims of society. This was, at least in an eminent degree, the case with Maurice Fern. He was not wilfully regardless of other people's comfort; he seemed rather to be unconscious of their existence, except in a dim, general way, as a man who gazes intently at a strong light will gradually lose sight of all surrounding objects. And for all that, he was, by nature, a generous man; in his unscientific moments, when his mind was, as it were, off duty, he was capable of very unselfish deeds, and even of sublime self-sacrifice. It was only a few weeks since he had given his plaid to a shivering old woman in the Scottish stage-coach, and caught a severe cold in consequence; but he had bestowed his charity in a reserved, matter-of-fact way which made the act appear utterly commonplace and unheroic. He found it less troublesome to shiver than to be compelled to see some one else shivering, and his generosity thus assumed the appearance of a deliberate choice between two evils.

Phenomena of this degree of complexity are extremely rare in Norway, where human nature, as everything else, is of the large-lettered, easily legible type; and even Tharald Ormgrass, who, in spite of his good opinion of himself, was not an acute observer, had a lively sense of the foreignness of the guest whom, for pecuniary reasons, he had consented to lodge during the remainder of the summer.

A large, quaint, low-ceiled chamber on the second floor, with a superfluity of tiny greenish window-panes, was assigned to the stranger, and his African servant, Jake, was installed in a smaller adjoining apartment. The day after his arrival Maurice spent in unpacking and polishing his precious instruments, which, in the incongruous setting of rough-hewn timbers and gaily painted Norse furniture, looked almost fantastic. The maid who brought him his meals (for he could waste no time in dining with the family) walked about on tip-toe, as if she were in a sick-chamber, and occasionally stopped to gaze at him with mingled curiosity and awe.

The Ormgrass farm consisted of a long, bleak stretch of hill-side, in part overgrown with sweet-brier and juniper, and covered with large, lichen-painted boulders. Here and there was a patch of hardy winter wheat, and at odd intervals a piece of brownish meadow. At the top of the slope you could see the huge shining ridge of the glacier, looming in threatening silence against the sky. Leaning, as it did, with a decided impulse to the westward, it was difficult to resist the impression that it had braced itself against the opposite mountain, and thrown its whole enormous weight against the Ormgrass hills for the purpose of forcing

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a passage down to the farm. To Maurice, at least, this idea suggested itself with considerable vividness as, on the second day after his arrival, he had his first complete view of the glacier. He had approached it, not from below, but from the western side, at the only point where ascent was possible. The vast expanse of the ice lay in cold, ghastly shade; for the sun, which was barely felt as a remote presence in the upper air, had not yet reached the depths of the valley. A silence as of death reigned everywhere; it floated up from the dim blue crevasses, it filled the air, it vibrated on the senses as with a vague endeavor to be heard. Jake, carrying a barometer, a surveyor's transit, and a multitude of smaller instruments, followed cautiously in his master's footsteps, and a young lad, Tharald Ormgrass's son, who had been engaged as a guide, ran nimbly over the glazed surface, at every step thrusting his steel-shod heels vindictively into the ice. But it would be futile for one of the uninitiated to attempt to follow Maurice in his scientific investigations; on such occasions he would have been extremely uninteresting to outside humanity, simply because outside humanity was the last thing he would have thought worth troubling himself about. And still his unremitting zeal in the pursuit of his aim, and his cool self-possession in the presence of danger, were not without a sublimity of their own; and the lustrous intensity of his vision as he grasped some new fact corroborative of some favorite theory, might well have stirred a sympathetic interest even in a mind of unscientific proclivities.

An hour after noon the three wanderers returned from their wintry excursion, Maurice calm and radiant, the ebony-faced Jake sore-footed and morose, and young Gudmund, the guide, with that stanch neutrality of countenance which with boys passes for dignity. The sun was now well in sight, and the silence of the glacier was broken. A thousand tiny rills, now gathering into miniature cataracts, now again scattering through a network of small, bluish channels, mingled their melodious voices into a hushed symphony, suggestive of fairy bells and elf-maidens dancing in the cool dusk of the arctic midsummer night.

Fern, with an air of profound preoccupation, seated himself on a ledge of rock at the border of the ice, took out his note-book and began to write.

"Jake," he said, without looking up, "be good enough to get us some dinner."

"We have nothing except some bread and butter, and some meat extract," answered the servant, demurely.

"That will be quite sufficient. You will find my pocket-stove and a bottle of alcohol in my valise."

Jake grumblingly obeyed; he only approved of science in so far as it was reconcilable with substantial feeding. He placed the lamp upon a huge boulder (whose black sides



were here and there enlivened with patches of buff and scarlet lichen), filled the basin with water from the glacier, and then lighted the wick. There was something obtrusively incongruous in seeing this fragile contrivance, indicating so many complicated wants, placed here among all the wild strength of primitive nature; it was like beholding the glacial age confronted with the nineteenth century.



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At this moment Fern was interrupted in his scientific meditations by a loud scream of terror, and lifting his eyes, he saw a picturesque combination of yellow, black, and scarlet (in its general outline resembling a girl), fleeing with desperate speed up the narrow path along the glacier. The same glance also revealed to him two red-painted wooden pails dancing down over the jagged boulders, and just about to make a final leap down upon the ice, when two determined kicks from his foot arrested them. Feeling somewhat solicitous about the girl, and unable to account for her fright, he hurried up the path; there she was again, still running, her yellow hair fluttering wildly about her head. He put his hands to his mouth and shouted. The echoes floated away over the desolate ice-hills, growing ever colder and feebler, like some abstract sound, deprived of its human quality. The girl, glancing back over her shoulder, showed a fair face, convulsed with agitation, paused for an instant to look again, and then dropped upon a stone in a state of utter collapse. One moment more and he was at her side. She was lying with her face downward, her blue eyes distended with fright, and her hands clutching some tufts of moss which she had unconsciously torn from the sides of the stone.

“My dear child,” he said, stooping down over her (there was always something fatherly in his manner toward those who were suffering), “what is it that has frightened you so? It is surely not I you are afraid of?”

The girl moved her head slightly, and her lips parted as with an effort to speak; but no sound came.

Fern seized her hand, and put his forefinger on her pulse.

“By Jove, child,” he exclaimed, “how you have been running!”

There was to him something very pathetic in this silent resignation of terror. All the tenderness of his nature was stirred; for, like many another undemonstrative person, he hid beneath a horny epidermis of apathy some deep-hued, warm-blooded qualities.

“There now,” he continued, soothingly; “you will feel better in a moment. Remember there is nothing to be afraid of. There is nobody here who will do you any harm.”

The young girl braced herself up on her elbow, and threw an anxious glance down the path.

“It surely was the devil,” she whispered, turning with a look of shy appeal toward her protector.

“The devil? Who was the devil?”

“He was all black, and he grinned at me so horribly;” and she trembled anew at the very thought.



“Don’t be a little goose,” retorted he, laughing. “It was a far less important personage. It was my servant, Jake. And it was God who made him black, just for the sake of variety, you know. It would be rather monotonous to have everybody as white as you and me.”



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She attempted to smile, feeling that it was expected of her; but the result was hardly proportionate to the effort. Her features were not of that type which lends itself easily to disguises. A simple maidenly soul, if the whole infinite variety of human masks had been at its disposal, would have chosen just such a countenance as this as its complete expression. There was nothing striking in it, unless an entirely faultless combination of softly curving lines and fresh flesh-tints be rare enough to merit that appellation; nor would any one but a cynic have called it a commonplace face, for the absolute sweetness and purity which these simple lines and tints expressed appealed directly to that part of one's nature where no harsh adjectives dwell. It was a feeling of this kind which suddenly checked Fern in the scientific meditation he was about to indulge, and spoiled the profound but uncharitable result at which he had already half arrived. A young man who could extract scientific information from the features of a beautiful girl could hardly be called human; and our hero with all his enthusiasm for abstract things, was as yet not exalted above the laws which govern his species.

The girl had, under his kindly ministry, recovered her breath and her spirits. She had risen, brushed the moss and loose earth from her dress, and was about to proceed on her way.

"I thank you," she said simply, reaching him her hand in Norse fashion. "You have been very good to me."

"Not at all," he answered, shaking her hand heartily. "And now, wouldn't you please tell me your name?"

"Elsie Tharald's daughter Ormgrass."

"Ah, indeed! Then we shall soon be better acquainted. I am living at your father's house."

## IV.

Two weeks had passed since Maurice's arrival at the farm. Elsie was sitting on the topmost step of the store-house stairs, intent upon some kind of coarse knitting-work, whose bag-like convexity remotely suggested a stocking. Some straggling rays of the late afternoon sun had got tangled in the loose locks on her forehead, which shone with a golden translucence. At the foot of the stairs stood her father, polishing with a woollen rag the tarnished silver of an ancient harness. At this moment Fern was seen entering the yard at the opposite side, and with his usual brisk step approaching the store-house. Elsie, looking up from her knitting, saw at once that there was something unusual in his manner—something which in another man you might have called agitation, but which with him was but an intenser degree of self-command.



“Good-evening,” he said, as he stopped in front of her father. “I have something I wish to speak with you about.”

“Speak on, young man,” answered Tharald, rubbing away imperturbably at one of the blinders. “Elsie isn’t likely to blab, even if what you say is worth blabbing.”



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"It is a more serious affair than you think," continued Fern, thrusting his peaked staff deep into the sod. "If the glacier goes on advancing at this rate, your farm is doomed within a year."

The old peasant raised his grizzly head, scratched with provoking deliberation the fringe of beard which lined his face like a frame, and stared with a look of supercilious scorn at his informant.

"If our fare don't suit you," he growled, "you needn't stay. We shan't try to keep you."

"I had no thought of myself," retorted Fern, calmly; for he had by this time grown somewhat accustomed to his host's disagreeable ways. "You will no doubt have observed that the glacier has, within the last thirty years, sent out a new branch to the westward, and if this branch continues to progress at its present rate, nothing short of a miracle can save you. During the first week after my arrival it advanced fifteen feet, as I have ascertained by accurate measurements, and during the last seven days it has shot forward nineteen feet more. If next winter should bring a heavy fall of snow, the nether edge may break off, without the slightest warning, and an avalanche may sweep down upon you, carrying houses, barns, and the very soil down into the fjord. I sincerely hope that you will heed my words, and take your precautions while it is yet time. Science is not to be trifled with; it has a power of prophecy surer than that of Ezekiel or Daniel."

"The devil take both you and your science!" cried the old man, now thoroughly aroused. "If you hadn't been poking about up there, and digging your sneezing-horn in everywhere, the glacier would have kept quiet, as it has done before, as far back as man's memory goes. I knew at once that mischief was brewing when you and your black Satan came here with your pocket-furnaces, and your long-legged gazing-tubes, and all the rest of your new-fangled deviltry. If you don't hurry up and get out of my house this very day, I will whip you off the farm like a dog."

Tharald would probably have continued this pleasing harangue for an indefinite period (for excitement acted as a powerful stimulus to his imagination), had he not just then felt the grasp of a hand upon his arm, and seen a pair of blue eyes, full of tearful appeal, raised to his.

"Get away, daughter," he grumbled, with that shade of gruffness which is but the transition to absolute surrender. "I am not talking to you."

"Oh, father," cried the girl, still clinging to his arm, "it is very wrong in you to talk to him in that way. You know very well that he would never do us any harm. You know he cannot move anything as large as the glacier."

"The devil only knows what he can't do," muttered Tharald, with a little explosive grunt, which might be interpreted as a qualified concession. The fact was, he was rather

ashamed of his senseless violence, but did not feel it to be consistent with his dignity to admit unconditionally that he had been in the wrong.



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"These learned chaps are not to be trusted, child," he went on, in a tone of serious remonstrance. "It isn't safe to have one of them fellows running about loose. I heard of one up in the West Parish last summer, who was staying with Lars Norby. He was running about with a bag and a hammer, and poking his nose into every nook and cranny of the rocks. And all the while he stayed there, the devil ran riot on the farm. Three cows slinked, the bay mare followed suit, and the chickens took the cramps, and died as fast as they were hatched. There was no luck in anything. I tell you, my lass, the Almighty doesn't like to have anybody peeping into His hand, and telling Him when to trump and when to throw a low card. That is the long and short of it. If we don't ship this fellow, smooth-faced and nice as he may be, we shall have a run of bad luck here, such as you never saw the like of before."

In the meanwhile, Maurice, not wishing to overhear the conversation, had entered the house, and father and daughter were left to continue their parley in private. There was really, as Elsie thought, some plausibility in the old man's prognostications, and the situation began to assume a very puzzling aspect to her mind. She admitted that scientists, viewed as a genus, were objectionable; but insisted that Fern, to whose personal charms she was keenly alive, was an exception to the rule. She felt confident that so good a man as he could never have tried to pry into the secrets of God Almighty. Tharald yielded grumblingly, inch by inch, and thus saved his dignity, although his daughter, in the end, prevailed. She obtained his permission to request the guest to remain, and not interpret too literally the rather hasty words he had used. Thus a compromise was effected. Fern suspended his packing, and resumed his objectionable attitude toward the mysteries of creation.

About a week after this occurrence, Maurice was walking along the beach, watching some peasant lads who were spearing trout in a brook near by. The sun had just dipped below the western mountain peaks, and a cool, bluish twilight, which seemed the essence of atmospheric purity, purged of all accessory effects, filled the broad, placid valley, and made it a luxury to breathe. The torches of the fishermen flitted back and forth between the slender stems of the birches, and now and then sent up a great glare of light among the foliage, which shone with a ghostly grayish green. The majestic repose of this scene sank deeply into Fern's mind; dim yearnings awoke in him, and a strange sense of kinship with these mountains, fjords, and glaciers rose from some unknown depth of his soul. He seemed suddenly to love them. Whenever he thought of Norway in later years, the impression of this night revived within him. After a long ramble over the sand, he chanced upon a low, turf-thatched cottage lying quite apart from the inhabited districts of the valley. The sheen of the fire upon the hearth-stone fell through the open door and out upon the white beach, and illuminated faintly the middle portion of a long fishing-net, which was suspended on stakes, for drying. Feeling a little tired, he seated himself on a log near the door, and gazed out upon the gleaming glaciers in the distance.



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While he was sitting thus, he was startled at the sound of a voice, deep, distinct, and sepulchral, which seemed to proceed from within the cottage.

"I see a book sealed with seven seals," the voice was saying. "Two of them are already broken, and when the third shall be broken—then it is all black—a great calamity will happen."

"Pray don't say that, Gurid," prayed another voice, with a touching, child-like appeal in it (and he instantly recognized it as Elsie's). "God is so very strong, you know, and He can certainly wipe away that black spot, and make it all bright again. And I don't know that I have done anything very wrong of late; and father, I know, is really very good, too, even if he does say some hard things at times. But he doesn't mean anything by it—and I am sure—"

"Be silent, child!" interrupted the first voice. "Thou dost not understand, and it is well for thee that thou dost not. For it is written, 'He shall visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation.'"

"How terrible!"

"Hush! Now I see a man—he is tall and beautiful—has dark hair and rather a dark face."

"Pray don't say anything more. I don't want to know. Is he to break the seals?"

"Then there is water—water—a long, long journey."

Maurice had listened to this conversation with feelings of mingled amusement and pity, very much as he would have listened to a duet, representing the usual mixture of gypsy and misguided innocence, in an old-fashioned opera. That he was playing the eavesdropper had never entered his mind. The scene seemed too utterly remote and unreal to come within the pale of moral canons. But suddenly the aspect of affairs underwent a revolution, as if the misguided young lady in the opera had turned out to be his sister, and he himself under obligation to interfere in her behalf. For at that moment there came an intense, hurried whisper, to which he would fain have closed his ears:

"And does he care for me as I do for him?"

He sprang up, his ears tingling with shame, and hurried down the beach. Presently it occurred to him, however, that it was not quite chivalrous in him to leave little Elsie there alone with the dark-minded sibyl. Who knew but that she might need his help? He paused, and was about to retrace his steps, when he heard some one approaching, whom he instinctively knew to be Elsie. As she came nearer, the moon, which hung transfixed upon the flaming spear of a glacier peak, revealed a distressed little face,



through whose transparent surface you might watch the play of emotions within, as one watches the doings of tiny insects and fishes in an aquarium.

“What have they been doing to my little girl?” asked Fern, with a voice full of paternal tenderness. “She has been crying, poor little thing.”



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He may have been imprudent in addressing a girl of seventeen in this tender fashion; but the truth was, her short skirts and the two long braids of yellow hair were in his mind associated with that age toward which you may, without offence, assume the role of a well-meaning protector, and where even a kiss need not necessarily be resented. So far from feeling flattered by the unwished-for recollection of Elsie's feeling for him, he was rather disposed to view it as a pathological phenomenon,—as a sort of malady, of which he would like to cure her. It is not to be denied, however, that if this was his intention, the course he was about to pursue was open to criticism. But it must be borne in mind that Fern was no expert on questions of the heart,—that he had had no blighting experiences yielding him an unwholesome harvest of premature wisdom.

For a long while they walked on in silence, holding each other's hands like two children, and the sound of their footsteps upon the crisp, crunching sand was singularly exaggerated by the great stillness around them.

"And whom is it you have been visiting so late in the night, Elsie?" he asked, at last, glancing furtively into her face.

"Hush, you mustn't talk about her," answered she, in a timid whisper. "It was Gurid Sibyl, and she knows a great many things which nobody else knows except God."

"I am sorry you have resort to such impostors. You know the Bible says it is wrong to consult sibyls and fortune-tellers."

"No, I didn't know it. But you mustn't speak ill of her, or she will sow disease in your blood and you will never see another healthy day. She did that to Nils Saetren because he mocked her, and he has been a cripple ever since."

"Pshaw, I am not afraid of her. She may frighten children—"

"Hush! Oh, don't!" cried the girl, in tones of distress, laying her hand gently over his mouth. "I wouldn't for the world have anything evil happen to you."

"Well well, you foolish child," he answered, laughing. "If it grieves you, I will say nothing more about it. But I must disapprove of your superstition all the same."

"Oh, no; don't think ill of me," she begged piteously, her eyes filling with tears.

"No no, I will not. Only don't cry. It always makes me feel awkward to see a woman cry."

She brushed her tears away and put on a resolute little pout, which was meant to be resigned if not cheerful.



Fifteen minutes later they were standing at the foot of the stairs leading up to his room. The large house was dark and silent. Everybody was asleep. Thinking the opportunity favorable for giving her a bit of parting advice, Maurice seized hold of both her arms and looked her gravely in the eyes. She, however, misinterpreting the gesture, very innocently put up her lips, thinking that he intended to kiss her. The sweet, child-like trustfulness of the act touched him; hardly knowing what he did, he stooped over her and kissed her. As their eyes again met, a deep, radiant contentment shone from her countenance. It was not a mere momentary brightening of the features, such as he had often noticed in her before, but something inexpressibly tender, soul-felt, and absolute. It was as if that kiss had suddenly transformed the child into a woman.



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### V.

Summer hurried on at a rapid pace, the days grew perceptibly shorter, and the birds of passage gathered in large companies on the beach and on the hill-tops, holding noisy consultations to prepare for their long southward journey. Maurice still stayed on at the Ormgrass Farm, but a strange, feverish mood had come over him. He daily measured the downward progress of the glacier in agitated expectancy, although as a scientific experiment it had long ceased to yield him any satisfaction. That huge congealed residue of ten thousand winters had, however, acquired a human interest to him which it had lacked before; what he had lost as a scientist he had gained as a man. For, with all respect for Science, that monumental virgin at whose feet so many cherished human illusions have already been sacrificed, it is not to be denied that from an unprofessional point of view a warm-blooded, fair-faced little creature like Elsie is a worthier object of a bachelor's homage. And, strive as he would, Maurice could never quite rid himself of the impression that the glacier harbored in its snowy bosom some fell design against Elsie's peace and safety. It is even possible that he never would have discovered the real nature of his feelings for her if it had not been for this constant fear that she might any moment be Snatched away from him.

It was a novel experience in a life like his, so lonely amid its cold, abstract aspirations, to have this warm, maidenly spring-breath invading those chambers of his soul, hitherto occupied by shivering calculations regarding the duration and remoteness of the ice age. The warmer strata of feeling which had long lain slumbering beneath this vast superstructure of glacial learning began to break their way to the light, and startled him very much as the earth must have been startled when the first patch of green sod broke into view, steaming under the hot rays of the noonday sun. Abstractly considered, the thing seemed preposterous enough for the plot of a dime novel, while in the light of her sweet presence the development of his love seemed as logical as an algebraic problem. At all events, the result was in both cases equally inexorable. It was useless to argue that she was his inferior in culture and social accomplishments; she was still young and flexible, and displayed an aptness for seizing upon his ideas and assimilating them which was fairly bewildering. And if purity of soul and loving singleness of purpose be a proof of noble blood, she was surely one of nature's noblewomen.

In the course of the summer, Fern had made several attempts to convince old Tharald that the glacier was actually advancing. He willingly admitted that there was a possibility that it might change its mind and begin to recede before any mischief was done, but he held it to be very hazardous to stake one's life on so slim a chance. The old man, however, remained impervious to argument, although he no longer lost his temper when the subject was broached. His ancestors had lived there on the farm century after century, he said, and the glacier had done them no harm. He didn't see why he should be treated any worse by the Almighty than they had been; he had always acted with tolerable fairness toward everybody, and had nothing to blame himself for.



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It was perhaps the third time when Tharald had thus protested his blamelessness, that his guest, feeling that reasoning was unavailing, let drop some rather commonplace remark about the culpability of all men before God.

Tharald suddenly flared up, and brought down his fist with a blow on the table.

“Somebody has been bearing tales to you, young man,” he cried. “Have you been listening to parish talk?”

“That matters little,” answered Fern, coolly. “No one is so blameless that he can claim exemption from misfortune as his just desert.”

“Aha, so they have told you that the farm is not mine,” continued his host, while his gray eyes glimmered uneasily under his bushy brows. “They have told you that silly nursery tale of the planting of the fern and the sweet-brier, and of Ulf, who sought his death in the glacier. They have told you that I stole the bride of my brother Arne, and that he fled from me over the sea,—and you have believed it all.”

At the sound of the name Arne, a flash darted through Maurice’s mind; he sprang up, stood for a moment tottering, and then fell back into the chair. Dim memories of his childhood rose up within him; he remembered how his father, who was otherwise so brave and frank and strong, had recoiled from speaking of that part of his life which preceded his coming to the New World. And now, he grasped with intuitive eagerness at this straw, but felt still a vague fear of penetrating into the secret which his father had wished to hide from him. He raised his head slowly, and saw Tharald’s face contracted into an angry scowl and his eyes staring grimly at him.

“Well, does the devil ride you?” he burst forth, with his explosive grunt.

Maurice brushed his hand over his face as if to clear his vision, and returned Tharald’s stare with frank fearlessness. There was no denying that in this wrinkled, roughly hewn mask there were lines and suggestions which recalled the free and noble mold of his father’s features. It was a coincidence of physiognomic intentions rather than actual resemblance—or a resemblance, such as might exist between a Vandyck portrait and the same face portrayed by some bungling village artist.

The old man, too, was evidently seeing visions; for he presently began to wince under Maurice’s steady gaze, and some troubled memory dwelt in his eye as he rose, and took to sauntering distractedly about on the floor.

“How long is it since your brother Arne fled over the sea?” asked Maurice, firmly.

“How does that concern you?”

“It does concern me, and I wish to know.”



Tharald paused in his walk, and stood long, measuring his antagonist with a look of slow, pondering defiance. Then he tossed his head back with a grim laugh, walked toward a carved oaken press in a corner, took out a ponderous Bible, and flung it down on the table.

“I am beginning to see through your game,” he said gruffly. “Here is the family record. Look into it at your leisure. And if you are right, let me know. But don’t you tell me that that scare about the glacier wasn’t all humbug. If it is your right of entail you want to look up, I sha’n’t stand in your way.”



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Thereupon he stalked out, slamming the door behind him; the walls shook, and the windows shivered in their frames.

A vast sheet of gauzy cloud was slowly spreading over the western expanse of the sky. Through its silvery meshes the full moon looked down upon the glacier with a grave unconcern. Drifts of cold white mist hovered here and there over the surface of the ice, rising out of the deep blue hollows, catching for an instant the moonbeams, and again gliding away into the shadow of some far-looming peak.

On the little winding path at the end of the glacier stood Maurice, looking anxiously down toward the valley. Presently a pale speck of color was seen moving in the fog, and on closer inspection proved to be that scarlet bodice which in Norway constitutes the middle portion of a girl's figure. A minute more, and the bodice was surmounted by a fair, girlish face, which looked ravishingly fresh and tangible in its misty setting. The lower portions, partly owing to their neutral coloring and in part to the density of the fog, were but vaguely suggested.

"I have been waiting for you nearly half an hour, down at the river-brink," called out a voice from below, and its clear, mellow ring seemed suddenly to lighten the heavy atmosphere. "I really thought you had forgotten me."

"Forgotten you?" cried Maurice, making a very unscientific leap down in the direction of the voice "When did I ever forget you, you ungrateful thing?"

"Aha!" responded Elsie, laughing, for of course the voice as well as the bodice was hers. "Now didn't you say the edge of the glacier?"

"Yes, but I didn't say the lower edge. If you had at all been gifted with the intuition proverbially attributed to young ladies in your situation, you would have known that I meant the western edge—in fact here, and nowhere else."

"Even though you didn't say it?"

"Even though I did say it."

Fern was now no longer a resident of the Ormgrass Farm. After the discovery of their true relation, Tharald had shown a sort of sullen, superstitious fear of him, evidently regarding him as a providential Nemesis who had come to avenge the wrong he had done to his absent brother. No amount of friendliness on Maurice's part could dispel this lurking suspicion, and at last he became convinced that, for the old man's sake as well as for his own, it was advisable that they should separate. This arrangement, however, involved a sacrifice which our scientist had at first been disposed to regard lightly; but a week or two of purely scientific companionship soon revealed to him how large a factor Elsie had become in his life, and we have seen how he managed to



reconcile the two conflicting necessities. The present rendezvous he had appointed with a special intention, which, with his usual directness, he proceeded to unfold to her.

“Elsie dear,” he began, drawing her down on a stone at his side, “I have something very serious which I wish to talk to you about.”



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“And why do you always want to talk so solemnly to me, Maurice?”

“Now be a brave little girl, Elsie, and don’t be frightened.”

“And is it, then, so very dreadful?” she queried, trembling a little at the gravity of his manner rather than his words.

“No, it isn’t dreadful at all. But it is of great importance, and therefore we must both be serious. Now, Elsie dear, tell me honestly if you love me enough to become my wife now, at once.”

The girl cast timid glances around her, as if to make sure that they were unobserved. Then she laid her arms round his neck, gazed for a moment with that trustful look of hers into his eyes, and put up her lips to be kissed.

“That is no answer, my dear,” he said, smiling, but responding readily to the invitation. “I wish to know if you care enough for me to go away with me to a foreign land, and live with me always as my wife.”

“I cannot live anywhere without you,” she murmured, sadly.

“And then you will do as I wish?”

“But it will take three weeks to have the banns published, and you know father would never allow that.”

“That is the very reason why I wish you to do without his consent. If you will board the steamer with me to-morrow night, we will go to England and there we can be married without the publishing of banns, and before any one can overtake us.”

“But that would be very wrong, wouldn’t it? I think the Bible says so, somewhere.”

“In Bible times marriages were on a different basis from what they are now. Moreover, love was not such an inexorable thing then, nor engagements so pressing.”

She looked up with eyes full of pathetic remonstrance, and was sadly puzzled.

“Then you will come, darling?” he urged, with lover-like persuasiveness. “Say that you will.”

“I will—try,” she whispered, tearfully, and hid her troubled face on his bosom.

“One thing more,” he went on. “Your house is built on the brink of eternity. The glacier is moving down upon you silently but surely. I have warned your father, but he will not believe me. I have chosen this way of rescuing you, because it is the only way.”



The next evening Maurice and his servant stood on the pier, waiting impatiently for Elsie, until the whistle sounded, and the black-hulled boat moved onward, ploughing its foamy path through the billows. But Elsie did not come.

Another week passed, and Maurice, fired with a new and desperate resolution, started for the capital, and during the coming winter the glacier was left free to continue its baneful plottings undisturbed by the importunate eyes of science. Immediately on his arrival in the city he set on foot a suit in his father's name against Tharald Gudmundson Ormgrass, to recover his rightful inheritance.

## VII.



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On a cold, bleak day, in the latter part of March, we find Maurice once more in the valley. He had played a hazardous game, but so far fortune had favored him. In that supreme self-trust which a great and generous passion inspires, he had determined to force Tharald Ormgrass to save himself and his children from the imminent destruction. The court had recognized his right to the farm upon the payment of five hundred dollars to its present nominal owner. The money had already been paid, and the farm lay now desolate and forlorn, shivering in the cold gusts from the glacier. The family had just boarded a large English brig which lay at anchor out in the fjord, and was about to set sail for the new world beyond the sea. In the prow of the vessel stood Tharald, gazing with sullen defiance toward the unknown west, while Elsie, her eyes red with weeping, and her piquant little face somewhat pinched with cold, was clinging close to him, and now and then glancing back toward the dear, deserted homestead.

It had been a sad winter for poor little Elsie. As the lawsuit had progressed, she had had to hear many a harsh word against her lover, which seemed all the harder because she did not know how to defend him. His doings, she admitted, did seem incomprehensible, and her father certainly had some show of justice on his side when he upbraided him as cruel, cold, and ungrateful; but, with the sweet, obstinate loyalty of a Norse maiden, she still persisted in believing him good and upright and generous. Some day it would all be cleared up, she thought, and then her triumph and her happiness would be the greater. A man who knew so many strange things, she argued in her simplicity (for her pride in his accomplishments was in direct proportion to her own inability to comprehend them), could not possibly be mean and selfish as other men.

The day had, somehow, a discontented, dubious look. Now its sombre veil was partially lifted, and something like the shadow of a smile cheered you by its promise, if not by its presence; then a great rush of light from some unexpected quarter of the heavens, and then again a sudden closing of all the sunny paths—a dismal, gray monotony everywhere. Now and then tremendous groans and long-drawn thunderous rumblings were heard issuing from the glaciers, and the ice-choked river, whose voice seldom rose above an even baritone, now boomed and brawled with the most capricious interludes of crashing, grinding, and rushing sounds.

On the pier down at the fjord stood Maurice, dressed from head to foot in flannel, and with a jaunty sailor's hat, secured with an elastic cord under his chin. He was gazing with an air of preoccupation up toward the farm, above which the white edge of the glacier hung gleaming against the dim horizon. Above it the fog rose like a dense gray wall, hiding the destructive purpose which was even at this moment laboring within. Some minutes elapsed. Maurice grew impatient, then anxious. He pulled his note-book from his pocket, examined some pages covered with calculations, dotted a neglected *i*, crossed a *t*, and at last closed the book with a desperate air. Presently some dark figure was seen striding down the hill-side, and the black satellite, Jake, appeared, streaming with mud and perspiration.



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“Well, you wretched laggard,” cried Maurice, as he caught sight of him, “what answer?”

“Nobody answered nothing at all,” responded Jake, all out of breath. “They be all gone. Aboard the ship, out there. All rigged, ready to sail.”

A few minutes later there was a slight commotion on board the brig *Queen Anne*. A frolicsome tar had thrown out a rope, and hauled in two men one white and one black. The crew thronged about them,

“English, eh?”

“No; American.”

“Yankees? Je-ru-salem! Saw your rig wasn’t right, somehow.”

General hilarity. Witty tar looks around with an air of magnanimous deprecation.

A strange feeling of exultation had taken possession of Maurice. The light and the air suddenly seemed glorious to him. He knew the world misjudged his action; but he felt no need of its vindication. He was rather inclined to chuckle over its mistake, as if it and not he were the sufferer. He walked with rapid steps toward the prow of the ship, where Tharald and Elsie were standing. There was a look of invincibility in his eye which made the old man quail before him. Elsie’s face suddenly brightened, as if flooded with light from within; she made an impulsive movement toward him, and then stood irresolute.

“Elsie,” called out her father, with a husky tremor in his voice. “Let him alone, I tell thee. He might leave us in peace now. He has driven from hearth and home.” Then, with indignant energy, “He shall not touch thee, child. By the heavens, he shall not.”

Maurice smiled, and with the same sense of serene benignity, wholly unlover-like, clasped her in his arms.

A wild look flashed in the father’s eyes; a hoarse groan broke from his chest. Then, with a swift rekindling of energy, he darted forward, and his broad hands fell with a tiger-like grip on Maurice’s shoulders. But hark! The voices of the skies and the mountains echo the groan. The air, surcharged with terror, whirls in wild eddies, then holds its breath and trembles. All eyes are turned toward the glacier. The huge white ridge, gleaming here and there through a cloud of smoke, is pushing down over the mountain-side, a black bulwark of earth rising tottering before it, and a chaos of boulders and blocks of ice following, with dull crunching and grinding noises, in its train. The barns and the store-house of the Ormgrass farm are seen slowly climbing the moving earth-wall, then follows the mansion—rising—rising—and with a tremendous, deafening crash the whole huge avalanche sweeps downward into the fjord. The water is lashed into foam; an enormous wave bearing on its crest the shattered wrecks of human homes, rolls



onward; the good ship *Queen Anne* is tossed skyward, her cable snaps and springs upward against the mast-head, shrieks of terror fill the air, and the sea flings its strong, foam-wreathed arms against the farther shore.



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A dead silence follows. The smoke scatters, breaks into drifting fragments, showing the black naked mountain-side.

The next morning, as the first glimmerings of the dawn pierced the cloud-veil in the east, the brig *Queen Anne* shot before a steady breeze out toward the western ocean. In the prow stood Maurice Fern, in a happy reverie; on a coil of rope at his feet sat Tharald Ormgrass, staring vacantly before him. His face was cold and hard; it had scarcely stirred from its dead apathy since the hour of the calamity. Then there was a patter of light footsteps on the deck, and Elsie, still with something of the child-like wonder of sleep in her eyes, emerged from behind the broad white sail.

Tharald saw her and the hardness died out of his face. He strove to speak once—twice, but could not.

“God pity me,” he broke out, with an emotion deeper than his words suggested. “I was wrong. I had no faith in you. She has. Take her, that the old wrong may at last be righted.”

And there, under God’s free sky, their hands were joined together, and the father whispered a blessing.

### **A KNIGHT OF DANNEBROG.**

#### **I.**

Victor Julien St. Denis Dannevig is a very aristocratic conglomeration of sound, as every one will admit, although the St. had a touch of irony in it unless placed before the Julien, where in the present case its suggestion was not wholly unappropriate. As he was when I first met him, his nature seemed to be made up of exquisite half-tints, in which the most antagonistic tastes might find something to admire. It presented no sharp angles to wound your self-esteem or your prejudices. Morally, intellectually, and physically, he was as smooth as velvet, and as agreeable to the touch. He never disagreed with you, whatever heterodox sentiments you might give vent to, and still no one could ever catch him in any positive inconsistency or self-contradiction. The extreme liberal who was on terms of intimacy with the nineteenth century, and passionately hostile to all temporal and spiritual rulers, put him down as a rising man, who might be confidently counted on when he should have shed his down and assume his permanent colors; and the prosperous conservative who had access to the private ear of the government lauded his good sense and his moderate opinions, and resolved to press his name at the first vacancy that might occur in the diplomatic service. In fact, every one parted from him with the conviction that at heart he shared his sentiments; even though for prudential reasons he did not choose to express himself with emphasis.



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The inference, I am afraid, from all this, is that Dannevig was a hypocrite; but if I have conveyed that impression to any one, I certainly have done my friend injustice. I am not aware that he ever consciously suspended his convictions for the sake of pleasing; but convictions require a comparative depth of soil in order to thrive, and Dannevig's mind was remarkable for territorial expanse rather than for depth. Of course, he did with astonishing ease assume the color of the person he was talking with; but this involved, with him, no conscious mental process, no deliberate insincerity. It was rather owing to a kind of constitutional adaptability, an unconquerable distaste for quarrelling, and the absence of any decided opinions of his own.

It was in the year 186—, just as peace had been concluded between Prussia and Denmark, that I made Dannevig's acquaintance. He was then the hero of the day; all Copenhagen, as it seemed, had gone mad over him. He had just returned from the war, in which he had performed some extraordinary feat of fool-hardiness and saved seven companies by the sacrifice of his mustache. The story was then circulating in a dozen different versions, but, as nearly as I could learn, he had, in the disguise of a peasant, visited the Prussian camp on the evening preceding a battle and had acted the fool with such a perfection of art as to convince the enemy of his harmlessness. Before morning, however, he had furnished the Danish commander with important intelligence, thereby preventing the success of a surprise movement which the Prussians were about to execute. In return for this service he had been knighted on the battle-field, the order of Dannebrog having been bestowed upon him.

One circumstance that probably intensified the charm which Dannevig exerted upon the social circles of the Danish capital was the mystery which shrouded his origin. There were vague whisperings of lofty parentage, and even royal names were hinted at, always, of course, in the strictest privacy. The fact that he hailed from France (though no one could say it for a certainty) and still had a Danish name and spoke Danish like a native, was in itself looked upon as an interesting anomaly. Then again, his easy, aristocratic bearing and his finely carved face suggested all manner of romantic possibilities; his long, delicate hands, the unobtrusive perfection of his toilet and the very texture of his handkerchiefs told plainly enough that he had been familiar with high life from the cradle. His way of living, too, was the subject of much curious comment. Without being really extravagant, he still spent money in a free-and-easy fashion, and always gave one the impression of having unbounded resources, though no one could tell exactly what they were. The only solution of the riddle was that he might have access to the treasury of some mighty man who, for reasons which perhaps would not bear publicity, felt called upon to support him.



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I had heard his name abundantly discussed in academical and social circles and was thoroughly familiar with the hypothetical part of his history before chance led me to make his personal acquaintance. He had then already lost some of his first lustre of novelty, and the professional yawners at club windows were inclining to the opinion that "he was a good enough fellow, but not made of stuff that was apt to last." But in the afternoon tea-parties, where ladies of fashion met and gently murdered each other's reputations, an allusion to him was still the signal for universal commotion; his very name would be greeted with clouds of ecstatic adjectives, and wild interjections and enthusiastic superlatives would fly buzzing about your ears until language would seem to be at its last gasp, and for a week to come the positive and comparative degrees would be applicable only to your enemies.

It was an open secret that the Countess von Brehm, one of the richest heiresses in the kingdom, was madly in love with him and would probably bestow her hand upon him in defiance of the wishes and traditions of her family. And what man, outside of the royal house, would be fool enough to refuse the hand of a Countess von Brehm?

### II.

During the winter 1865-66, I met Dannevig frequently at clubs, student festivals, and social gatherings, and his melodious voice, his epigrammatic talk, and his beauty never failed to extort from me a certain amount of reluctant admiration. I could not help noticing, however, that his charming qualities were all very much on the surface, and as for his beauty, it was of a purely physical kind. As a mere animal he could not have been finer. His eyes were as pure and blue and irresponsible as a pair of spring violets, and his face was as clean-cut and perfect as an ideal Greek mask, and as devoid of spiritual meaning. His animation was charmingly heedless and genuine, but nevertheless was mere surface glitter and never seemed to be the expression of any really strong and heartfelt emotion. I could well imagine him pouting like Achilles over the loss of a lovely Briseis and bursting into vituperative language at the sight of the robber; but the very moment Briseis was restored his wrath would as suddenly have given way to the absolute bliss of possession.

The evening before my final departure from Copenhagen he gave a little party for me at his apartments, at which a dozen or more of our friends were invited.

I must admit that he was an admirable host. Without appearing at all to exert himself, he made every one feel at his ease, filled up every gap in the conversation with some droll anecdote or personal reminiscence, and still contrived to make us all imagine that we were entertaining instead of being entertained. The supper was a miracle of culinary skill, and the wines had a most refined and aristocratic flavor. He ate and drank with the deliberation and relish of a man who, without being exactly a gourmand, nevertheless counted the art of dining among the fine arts, and prided himself on being something of



a connoisseur. Nothing, I suppose, could have ruined me more hopelessly in his estimation than if I had betrayed unfamiliarity with table etiquette,—if, for instance, I poured Rhine wine into the white glasses, or sherry or Madeira into the blue.



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As the hours of the night advanced, Dannevig's brilliancy rose to an almost dangerous height, which, as it appeared to us, could end in nothing short of an explosion. And the explosion came at last in the shape of a speech which I shall quote as nearly as the long lapse of years will permit.

After some mysterious pantomimic play directed toward a singularly noiseless and soft-mannered butler, our host arose, assumed an attitude as if he were about to address the universe, and spoke as follows:

"Gentlemen! As our distinguished friend here (all Americans, as you are aware, are born sovereigns and accordingly distinguished) is about to leave us, the spirit moves me to give voice to the feeling which animates us all at this peculiar juncture of events." (Here the butler returned with two bottles, which Dannevig seized and held up for general inspection.) "Bravo! here I hold in my hand a rare and potent juice, the condensed essence of all that is rich and fair and sweet in the history, character, and climate of *la belle France*, a juice for which the mouths of princes have often watered in vain—in short a bottle of Chateau Yquem. I have my reasons for plucking the fairest bloom of my cellar on an occasion like this: for what I am about to say is not entirely in the nature of a compliment, and the genial influence of this royal wine will be needed to counteract the possible effects of my speech. In other words, I want the goodness of my wine to compensate for the rudeness of my intended remarks.

"America has never until now had the benefit of my opinion of her, which may in part account for the crudeness of her present condition. Now she has sent a competent emissary to us, who will return and faithfully report my sentiments, and if he does his work well, you may be prepared for revolutions beyond the Atlantic in decades to come. To begin with the beginning: the American continent, extending as it does from pole to pole, with a curious attenuation in the middle, always looked to me in my boyhood as a huge double bag flung across the back of the world; the symbolic sense of this form was not then entirely clear to me; but now, I think, I divine its meaning. As the centuries with their changing civilizations rolled over Europe, it became apparent to the Almighty that a spacious lumber-room was needed, where all the superfluous odds and ends that no longer fitted to the changed order of things might be stowed away for safe-keeping. Now, as you will frequently in a lumber-room, amid a deal of absolute dross, stumble upon an object of rare and curious value, so also in America you may, among heaps of human trumpery, be startled by the sparkle of a genuine human jewel. Our friend here, I need not add, is such a jewel, though cut according to the fashion of the last century, when men went wild over liberty and other illusory ideals and when, after having exhausted all the tamer kinds of dissipation, they amused themselves by cutting

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each other's heads off. Far be it from me to impute any such truculent taste to my honored guest. I only wish to observe that the land from which he hails has not yet outlived the revolutionary heresies of a century ago, that his people is still afflicted with those crude fever fantasies, of which Europe was only cured by a severe and prolonged bleeding. It has always been a perplexing problem to me, how a man who has seen the Old World can deliberately choose such a land as his permanent abode. I, for my part, should never think of taking such a step until I had quarrelled with all the other countries of the world, one by one, and as life is too short for such an experience, I never expect to claim the hospitality of Brother Jonathan under his own roof.

"As regards South America, I never could detect its use in the cosmic economy, unless it was flung down there in the southern hemisphere purely as ballast, to prevent the globe from upsetting.

"Now, the moral of these edifying remarks is that I would urge my guest to correct, as soon as possible, the mistake he made in the choice of his birthplace. As a man never can be too circumspect in the selection of his parents, so neither can he exercise too much caution in the choice of his country. My last word to thee is: 'Fold thy tent, and pitch it again where mankind, politics and cookery are in a more advanced state of development.' Friends, let us drink to the health of our guest, and wish for his speedy return."

I replied with, perhaps, some superfluous ardor to this supercilious speech, and a very hot discussion ensued. When the company finally broke up, Dannevig, fearing that he had offended me, laid his arm confidentially on my shoulder, drew me back from the door, and pushed me gently into an easy-chair.

"Look here!" he said, planting himself in front of me. "It will never do for you and me to part, except as friends. I did not mean to patronize you, and if my foolish speech impressed you in that way, I beg you to forgive me."

He held out his long, beautiful hand, which after some hesitation I grasped, and peace was concluded.

"Take another cigar," he continued, throwing himself down on a damask-covered lounge opposite me. "I am in a confiding mood to-night, and should like to tell you something. I feel an absolute need to unbosom myself, and Fate points to you as the only safe receptacle of my confidence. After to-morrow, the Atlantic will be between us, and if my secret should prove too explosive for your reticence, your indiscretion will do me no harm. Listen, then. You have probably heard the town gossip connecting my name with that of the Countess von Brehm."



I nodded assent.

“Well, my modesty forbids me to explain how far the rumor is true. But, the fact is, she has given me the most unmistakable proofs of her favor. Of course, a man who has seen as much of the world as I have cannot be expected to reciprocate such a passion in its sentimental aspects; but from its—what shall I say?”



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“Say, from a financial point of view it is not unworthy of your consideration,” I supplied, unable to conceal my disgust.

“Well, yes,” he resumed blandly, “you have hit it. However, I am by no means blind to her fascination. Moreover, the countess has a latent vein of fierceness in her nature which in time may endear her to my heart. Last night, for instance, we were at a ball at the Baron P——’s, and we danced together incessantly. While we were whirling about to the rhythm of an intoxicating melody, I, feeling pretty sure of my game, whispered half playfully in her ear: ‘Countess, what would you say, if I should propose to you?’ ‘Propose and you will see,’ she answered gravely, while those big black eyes of hers flashed at until I felt half ashamed of my flippancy. Of course I did not venture to put the question then and there, although I was sorely tempted. Now that shows that she has spirit, to say the least. What do you think?”

“I think,” I answered, with emphasis, “that if I were a friend of the Countess von Brehm I should go to her to-morrow and implore her to have nothing to do with you.”

“By Jove,” he burst forth, laughing; “if I were a friend of the countess, I should do the very same thing; but being her lover, I cannot be expected to take such a disinterested view of the case. Moreover, my labor would be thrown away; for, *entre nous*, she is too much in love with me.”

I felt that if I stayed a moment longer we should inevitably quarrel. I therefore rose, somewhat abruptly, and pulled on my overcoat, averring that I was tired and should need a few hours of sleep before embarking in the morning.

“Well,” he said, shaking my hand heartily, as we parted in the hall, “if ever you should happen to visit Denmark again, you must promise me that you will look me up. You have a standing invitation to my future estate.”

### III.

Some three years later I was sitting behind my editorial desk in a newspaper office in Chicago, and the impressions from my happy winter in Copenhagen had well nigh faded from memory. The morning mail was brought in, and among my letters I found one from a Danish friend with whom I had kept up a desultory correspondence. In the letter I found the following paragraph:

“Since you left us, Dannevig has been going steadily down hill, until at last his order of Dannebrog just managed to keep him respectable. About a month ago he suddenly vanished from the social horizon, and the rumor says that he has fled from his numerous creditors, and probably now is on his way to America. His resources, whatever they were, gradually failed him, while his habits remained as extravagant as

ever. If the popular belief is to be credited, he lived during the two last years on his prospect of marrying the Countess von Brehm, which prospect in Copenhagen was always convertible into cash. The countess, by the way,



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was unflinching in her devotion to him, and he would probably long ago have led her to the altar, if her family had not so bitterly opposed him. The old count, it is said, swore that he would disinherit her if she ever mentioned his name to him again; and those who know him feel confident that he would have kept his word. The countess, however, was quite willing to make that sacrifice, for Dannevig's sake; but here, unfortunately, that cowardly prudence of his made a fool of him. He hesitated and hesitated long enough to wear out the patience of a dozen women less elevated and heroic than she is. Now the story goes that the old count, wishing at all hazards to get him out of the way, made him a definite proposition to pay all his debts, and give him a handsome surplus for travelling expenses, if he would consent to vanish from the kingdom for a stated term of years. And according to all appearances Dannevig has been fool enough to accept the offer. I should not be surprised if you would hear from him before long, in which case I trust you will keep me informed of his movements. A Knight of Dannebrog, you know, is too conspicuous a figure to be entirely lost beneath the waves of your all-levelling democracy. Depend upon it, if Dannevig were stranded upon a desert isle, he would in some way contrive to make the universe aware of his existence. He has, as you know, no talent for obscurity; there is a spark of a Caesar in him, and I tremble for the fate of your constitution if he stays long enough among you."

Four months elapsed after the receipt of this letter, and I had almost given up the expectation (I will not say hope) of seeing Dannevig, when one morning the door to my office was opened, and a tall, blonde-haired man entered. With a certain reckless grace, which ought to have given me the clue to his identity, he sauntered up to my desk and extended his hand to me.

"Hallo, old boy!" he said, with a weak, weary smile. "How are you prospering? You don't seem to know me."

"Heavens!" I cried, "Dannevig! No, I didn't know you. How you have altered!"

He took off his hat, and flung himself into a chair opposite me. His large, irresponsible eyes fixed themselves upon mine, with a half-daring, half-apologetic look, as if he were resolved to put the best face on a desperate situation. His once so ambitious mustache drooped despondingly, and his unshaven face had an indescribably withered and dissipated look. All the gloss seemed to have been taken off it, and with it half its beauty and all its dignity had departed.

"Dannevig," I said, with all the sympathy I had at my command, "what *has* happened to you? Am I to take your word for it, that you have quarrelled with all the world, and that this is your last refuge?"



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“Well,” he answered, evasively, “I should hardly say that. It is rather your detestable democratic cookery which has undone me. I haven’t had a decent meal since I set my foot on this accursed continent. There is an all-pervading plebeian odor of republicanism about everything one eats here, which is enough to ruin the healthiest appetite, and a certain barbaric uniformity in the bill of fare which would throw even a Diogenes into despair. May the devil take your leathery beef-steaks, as tough as the prose of Tacitus, your tasteless, nondescript buckwheats, and your heavy, melancholy wines, and I swear it would be the last you would hear of him!”

“There! that will do, Dannevig!” I cried, laughing. “You have said more than enough to convince me of your identity. I do admit I was sceptical as to whether this could really be you, but you have dispelled my last doubts. It was my intention to invite you to dine with me to-day but you have quite discouraged me. I live quite *en garcon*, you know, and have no Chateau Yquem nor pheasant *a la Sainte Alliance*, and whatever else your halcyon days at the Cafe Anglais may have accustomed you to.”

“Never mind that. Your company will in part reconcile me to the republicanism of your table. And, to put the thing bluntly, can you lend me thirty dollars? I have pawned my only respectable suit of clothes for that amount, and in my present costume I feel inexpressibly plebeian,—very much as if I were my own butler, and—what is worse—I treat myself accordingly. I never knew until now how much of the inherent dignity of a man can be divested with his clothing. Then another thing: I am absolutely forced to do something, and, judging by your looks, I should say that journalism was a profitable business. Now, could you not get me some appointment or other in connection with your paper? If, for instance, you want a Paris correspondent, then I am just your man. I know Paris by heart, and I have hobnobbed with every distinguished man in France.”

“But we could hardly afford to pay you enough to justify you in taking the journey on our account.”

“*O sancta simplicitas!* No, my boy, I have no such intention. I can make up the whole thing with perfect plausibility, here under your own roof; and by little study of the foreign telegrams, I would undertake to convince Thiers and Jules Favre themselves that I watched the play of their features from my private box at the French opera, night before last, that I had my eye at the key-hole while they performed their morning ablutions, and was present as eavesdropper at their most secret councils. Whatever I may be, I hope you don’t take me to be a chicken.”

“No,” I answered, beguiled into a lighter mood by his own levity. “It might be well for you if you were more of one. But as Paris correspondent, we could never engage you, at least not on the terms you propose. But even if I should succeed in getting a place for you, do you know English enough to write with ease?”



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"I see you are disposed to give vent to your native scepticism toward me. But I never knew the thing yet that I could not do. At first, perhaps, I should have to depend somewhat upon your proof-reading, but before many months, I venture to say, I could stand on my own legs."

After some further parley it was agreed that I should exert myself in his behalf, and after a visit to the pawnbroker's, where Dannevig had deposited his dignity, we parted with the promise to meet again at dinner.

### IV.

It was rather an anomalous position for a knight of Dannebrog, a familiar friend of princes and nobles, and an *ex-habitu*e of the Cafe Anglais, to be a common reporter on a Chicago republican journal. Yet this was the position to which (after some daring exploits in book-reviewing and art criticism) my friend was finally reduced. As an art-critic, he might have been a success, if western art had been more nearly in accord with his own fastidious and exquisitely developed taste. As it was, he managed in less than a fortnight to bring down the wrath of the whole artistic brotherhood upon our journal, and as some of these men were personal friends of the principal stockholders in the paper, his destructive ardor was checked by an imperative order from the authorities, from whose will there is no appeal. As a book-reviewer he labored under similar disadvantages; he stoutly maintained that the reading of a volume would necessarily and unduly bias the critic's judgment, and that a man endowed with a keen, literary nose could form an intelligent opinion, after a careful perusal of the title-page, and a glance at the preface. A man who wrote a book naturally labored under the delusion that he was wiser or better than the majority of his fellow-creatures, in which case you would do moral service by convincing him of his error, inhumanity continued to encourage authorship at the present rate, obscurity would soon become a claim to immortality. If a writer informed you that his work "filled a literary void," his conceit was reprehensible, and on moral grounds he ought to be chastised; if he told you that he had only "yielded to the urgent request of his friends," it was only fair to insinuate that his friends must have had very long ears. Nevertheless, Dannevig's reviews were for about a month a very successful feature of our paper. They might be described as racy little essays, bristling with point and epigram, on some subject suggested by the title-pages of current volumes. At the end of that time, however, books began to grow scarce in our office, and before another month was at an end, we had no more need of a reviewer. My friend was then to have his last trial as a reporter.

One of his first experiences in this new capacity was at a mass-meeting preceding an important municipal election. Not daring to send his "copy" to the printer without revision, I determined to sacrifice two or three hours' sleep, and to await his return. But the night wore on, the clock struck twelve, one, and two, and no Dannevig appeared. I began to grow anxious; our last form went to press at four o'clock, and I had left a

column and a half open for his expected report. Not wishing to resort to dead matter, I hastily made some selections from a fresh magazine, and sent them to the foreman.



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The next day, about noon, a policeman brought me the following note, written in pencil, on a leaf torn from a pocket-book.

DEAR FRIEND;

I made a speech last night (and a very good one too) in behalf of oppressed humanity, but its effect upon my audience was, to say the least, singular. Its results, as far as I am personally concerned were also somewhat unpleasant. Looking at myself in my pocketglass this morning, I find that my nose has become disproportionately prominent, besides showing an abnormal lateral development. If you would have the goodness to accompany the obliging gentleman, who is the bearer of this, to my temporary lodgings, I will further explain the situation to you. By the way, it is absolutely necessary that you should come.

Yours in haste,

VICTOR J. ST. D. DANNEVIG, R.D.O.[A]

[Footnote A: Knight of the Order of Dannebrog.]

I found Dannevig, as I had expected, at the so-called Armory (the city prison), in pleasant converse with half-a-dozen policemen, to whom he was describing, with inimitable grace and good-humor, his adventures of the preceding night. He was too absorbed in his narrative to notice my arrival, and I did not choose to interrupt him.

“You can imagine, gentlemen,” he was saying, accompanying his words with the liveliest gesticulations, “how the rude contact of a plebeian fist with my tender skin must have impressed me. Really gentlemen, I was so surprised that I literally lost my balance. I was, as you are no doubt aware, merely asserting my rights as a free citizen to protest against the presumptions of the unprincipled oligarchy which is at present ruling this fair city. My case is exactly parallel to that of Caius Gracchus, who, I admit, reaped a similar reward.”

“But you were drunk,” replied a rude voice from his audience. “Dead drunk.”

“Drunk,” ejaculated Dannevig, with a gesture of dignified deprecation. “Now, I submit it to you as gentlemen of taste and experience: how would you define that state of mind and body vulgarly styled ‘drunk?’ I was merely pleasantly animated, as far as such a condition can be induced by those vulgar liquids which you are in the habit of imbibing in this benighted country. Now, if I had had the honor of your acquaintance in the days of my prosperity, it would have given me great pleasure to raise your standard of taste regarding wines and alcoholic liquors. The mixed drinks, which are held in such high esteem in this community, are, in my opinion, utterly demoralizing.”



Thinking it was high time to interrupt this discourse, I stepped up to the orator, and laid my hand on his shoulder.

“Dannevig,” I said, “I have no time to waste Let me settle this business for you at once.”

“In a moment I shall be at your service,” he answered, gracefully waving his hand; and for some five minutes more he continued his harangue on the corrupting effects of mixed drinks.



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After a visit to the court-room, a brief examination, and the payment of a fine, we took our departure. Feeling in an exceptionally amiable mood, Dannevig offered me his arm, and as we again passed the group of policemen at the door he politely raised his dilapidated hat to them, and bade them a pleasant good-morning. The cross of Dannebrog, with its red ribbon, was dangling from the button-hole of his coat, the front of which was literally glazed with the stains of dried punch.

“My type of countenance, as you will observe,” he remarked, as we hailed a passing omnibus, “presents some striking deviations from the classic ideal; but it is a consoling reflection that it will probably soon resume its normal form.”

Of course, all the morning as well as the evening papers, recounted, with flaming headings, Dannevig’s oration, and his ignominious expulsion from the mass-meeting, and the most unsparing ridicule was showered both upon him and the journal which, for the time, he represented. One more experience of a similar nature terminated his career as a journalist; I dared no longer espouse his cause and he was dismissed in disgrace. For some weeks he vanished from my horizon, and I began to hope that he had again set his face toward the Old World, where talents of the order he possessed are at higher premium in the social market. But in this hope I was to be grievously disappointed.

### V.

One day, just as I had ordered my lunch at a restaurant much frequented by journalists, a German, named Pfeifer, one of the largest stockholders in our paper, entered and seated himself at the table opposite me. He was a somewhat puffy and voluminous man with a very round bald head, and an air of defiant prosperity about him. He had retired from the brewery business some years ago, with a very handsome fortune.

“I have been hunting for you high and low,” he began in his native tongue. “You know there is to be a ball in the *Turnverein* to-morrow night,—a very grand affair, they say. I suppose they have sent you tickets.”

“Yes, two.”

“And are you going?”

“I had half made up my mind to send Fenner or some one else.”

Mr. Pfeifer here grew superfluously confidential and related to me in a mysterious whisper his object in seeking me. The fact was, he had a niece really *ein allerliebstes Kind*, who had come from Milwaukee to visit him and was to spend the winter with him. Now, to be honest, he knew very few young gentlemen whom he would be willing to have her associate with, and the poor child had set her heart on going to the *Turn*-ball



to-morrow. Would I kindly overlook the informality of his request, and without telling the young lady of his share in the proceeding, offer her my escort to the ball? Would I be responsible for her and bring her home in good season? And to avert Fraulein Pfeifer's possible suspicions, would I come and dine at his house to-night and make her acquaintance?



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To refuse the acquaintance of a young lady who even remotely answered to the description of “a very lovely child,” was contrary to my principles, and I need not add that I proved faithful to them in the present instance.

A German, even if he be not what one would call a cultivated man, has nevertheless a certain sombre historic background to his life which makes him averse to those garish effects of barbaric splendor that impress one so unpleasantly in the houses of Americans whose prosperity is unsupported by a corresponding amount of culture. This was my first reflection on entering Mr. Pfeifer’s drawing-room, while in my heart I begged the proprietor’s pardon for the patronizing attitude I found myself assuming toward him. The heavy, solid furniture, the grave and decorously mediocre pictures, and the very tint of the walls wore an air of substantial, though somewhat lugubrious comfort. His niece, too, although her form was by no means lacking in grace, seemed somehow to partake of this all-pervading air of Teutonic solidity and homelike comfort. She was one of those women who seemed born to make some wretched man undeservedly happy. (I always feel a certain dim hostility to any man, even though I may not know him, who marries a charming and lovable woman; it is with me a foregone conclusion that he has been blessed beyond his deserts.) There was a sweet matronliness and quiet dignity in her manner, and beneath the placid surface of her blue eyes I suspected hidden depths of pure maidenly sentiment. The cast of her countenance was distinctly Germanic; not strikingly beautiful, perhaps, but extremely pleasing; there was no discordant feature in it, no loud or harsh suggestion to mar the subdued richness of the whole picture. Her blond hair was twisted into a massive coil on the top of her head, and the unobtrusive simplicity and taste of her toilet were merely her character (as I had conceived it) translated into millinery. My feelings, as I stood gazing at her, unconsciously formulated themselves into the well-known benediction of Heine’s, which I could with difficult keep from quoting:

“Mir ist als ob ich die Haende,  
Auf’s Haupt dir legen sollt’,  
Betend dass Gott dich erhalte,  
So rein mid schoen und hold.”

I observed with quiet amusement, though in a very sympathetic spirit, that she did not manage her train well; and from the furtive attention she was ever bestowing upon it, I concluded that her experience with long dresses must have been of recent date. I noticed, too, as she came forward to salute me, that her hands were not unused to toil; but for this I only honored her the more.

The dinner was as serious and substantial as everything else in Mr. Pfeifer’s house, and passed off without any notable incident. The host persisted in talking business with me, which the young lady, at whose side I sat, accepted as a matter-of-course, making apparently no claim whatever upon the smallest share of my attention. When the long and tedious meal was at an end, upon her uncle’s suggestion, she seated herself at the

piano, and sang in a deep, powerful contralto, Schubert's magnificent arrangement of Heine's song of unrequited love:



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“Ich grolle nicht, und wenn das Herz auch bricht,  
Ewig verlornes Lieb! ich grolle nicht.  
Wie du auch strahlst in Diamantenpracht,  
Es fällt kein Strahl in deines Herzens Nacht.”

There was a pathos and passion in her voice which fairly startled me, and when I hastened to her side to thank her for the pleasure she had given me, she accepted my compliments with a beautiful, unaffected enthusiasm, as if they were meant only for the composer, and were in no respect due to her.

“There is such a depth of suffering in every word and note,” she said with glowing cheeks. “He bears her no ill-will, he says, and still you feel how the suppressed bitterness is still rankling within him.”

She then sang “Auf Fluegeln des Gesanges,” whereupon we sat down and talked music and Heine for the rest of the evening. Mr. Pfeifer, reclining in his capacious easy-chair, smoked on with slow, brooding contentment, and now and then threw in a disparaging remark regarding our favorite poet.

“He blackguarded his country abominably,” he said. “And I have no respect for a man who can do that. Besides, he was a miserable, renegade Jew, and as I never like to have any more to do with Jews than I can possibly help, I have never read any of his books.”

“But, uncle,” retorted his niece, warmly, “he certainly could not help being a Jew. And there was no one who loved Germany more ardently than he, even though he did say severe things about it.”

“That is a thing about which you can have no opinion, Hildegard,” said Pfeifer, with paternal decision; and he blew a dense cloud of smoke toward the ceiling.

Miss Hildegard looked rebellious for an instant, but accepted the verdict of superior wisdom with submissive silence. The old man gave me a little confidential wink as if to say:

“There is a model girl for you. She knows that women should not speak in meeting.”

“What a delightfully fresh and unspoiled girl,” I reflected, as I wended my way homeward through the still moonlight; “so true-hearted, and genuine, and unaffected. And still beneath all that sweet, womanly tranquillity there are strong slumbering forces, which some day will startle some phlegmatic countryman of hers, who takes her to be as submissive as she looks.”



## VI.

Some fifteen minutes after the appointed hour I called with a carriage for Fraulein Hildegard, whom, to my wonder, I found standing in all the glory of her ball-toilet (for she was evidently afraid to sit down) in the middle of the sombre drawing-room. I had been prepared to wait for a good half-hour, and accordingly felt a little provoked at myself for my seeming negligence.

“I do not mind telling you,” she said, as I sat compressed in a corner of the carriage, striving to reduce myself to the smallest practicable dimensions, “that this is my first ball. I don’t know any of the gentlemen who will be there to-night, but I know two or three Milwaukee ladies who have promised to come, so, even if I don’t dance much, I shall not feel lonely.”



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“Of course you will give me the first chance at your card,” I answered. “How many dances will you grant me?”

“As many as you want. Uncle was very explicit in impressing upon me that I am to obey you unquestioningly and have no will of my own.”

“That was very unkind of him. I shall be unwilling to claim any privilege which you do not of your own free will bestow upon me.”

“I didn’t mean it so,” she answered, impulsively, and by the passing light of a gas-lamp I caught a glimpse of her beaming, innocent face. “I shall not be apt to forget that I am indebted to your kindness for all the pleasure I shall have to-night, and if you wish to dance with me, of course it is very kind of you.”

“Well, that is not much better,” I murmured, ruefully, feeling very guilty at heart. “On that ground I should be still more reluctant to assert my claim on you.”

“Oh, what a bungler I am!” she exclaimed with half-amused regret. “The truth is, I am so glad, and when I am very happy I always make blundering speeches.”

As we entered the magnificently lighted and decorated hall, I noticed, to my dismay, that the company was a little more mixed than I had anticipated. I had, therefore, no scruples in putting down my name for four waltzes and a quadrille. I observed, too, that my fair partner attracted much attention, partly, perhaps, on account of her beauty, and partly on account of her superb toilet. Her dress was of satin, of a cool, lucid, sea-green tint, such as one sees in the fjords of Norway on a bright summer’s day; the illusion was so perfect that in dancing with her I expected every moment to see sea-weeds and pale-green things sprouting up along its border, and the white bunches of lilies-of-the-valley in her hair, as they wafted their faint fragrance toward me, seemed almost an anomaly. She danced, not with vehement abandon, but with an airy, rhythmical grace, as if the music had entered into her soul and her limbs were but obeying their innate tuneful impulse. When we had finished the first waltz, I left her in the company of one of her Milwaukee friends and started out in quest of some acceptable male partner whose touch of her I should not feel to be a positive desecration. I had reached about the middle of the hall when an affectionate slap on my shoulder caused me to turn around.

“Dannevig!” I exclaimed, with frigid amazement “By Jove! Where do you come from? You are as unexpected as a thunderclap from a cloudless sky.”

“Which was a sign that Jupiter was wroth,” replied Dannevig, promptly, “and required new sacrifices. Now the sacrifice I demand of you is that you shall introduce me to that charming little girl you have had the undeserved luck of securing.”



“You choose your metaphors well,” I remarked, calmly. “But, as you know, even the Romans with all their reputed hardness of heart, were too conscientious to tolerate human sacrifices. And I, being, in the present instance, the *pontifex*, would never be a party to such an atrocity.”



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The transformation which Dannevig's face underwent was almost terrible. A look of perfectly animal savageness distorted for a brief moment his handsome features; his eyes flashed, and his brow was one mass of wrinkles.

"Do you mean to say that you refuse to introduce me?" he asked, in a hoarse whisper.

"That is exactly what I mean to say," I answered, with well-feigned coolness.

"And do you really suppose," he continued, while his brow slowly relaxed, "that you can prevent me from making that girl's acquaintance, if I have made up my mind to thwart you?"

"I don't suppose anything of the kind," was my reply. "But you know me well enough to be aware that you cannot browbeat me. She shall, at all events, not owe your acquaintance to me."

Dannevig stood for a while, pondering; then with one of those sudden transitions of feeling which were so characteristic of him, he continued in a tone of good-fellowship:

"Come, now; this is ridiculous! You have been dining on S——'s leathery beef-steak, which I have so frequently warned you against, and, what is worse, you have had mince pie for dessert. Your digestion is seriously deranged. For old friends like you and me to quarrel over a little chit of a girl, is as absurd as committing suicide because you have scratched your hand with a pin. If your heart is really engaged in this affair, then I won't interfere with you. I wish you luck, although judging by what I have seen, I should say you might have made a better choice. *Au revoir.*"

He skipped lightly down the floor, and was lost in the crowd. Having selected some journalistic friends as partners for Fraulein Hildegard, and listened with great patience to their rhapsodies over her beauty and loveliness, I stationed myself at the upper end of the hall, and in philosophic discontent watched the dancers. Dannevig's parting words had filled me with vague alarm; I knew that they were insincere, and I suspected that he was even now at work to accomplish some disastrous intention. At this moment a couple came whirling straight toward me; a pale-green satin, train swept over my feet, and the cross of the order of Dannebrog sent a swift flash into my very eyes. A fierce exclamation escaped me; my blood was in tumult. I began to feel dangerous. As the usual accelerated rush of violins and drums announced that the dance was near its end, I did not dare to seek my fair partner, and I had no pleasure to feign when I saw her advancing, with a light and eager step, to where I was standing. She was evidently too preoccupied to notice the change I had undergone since our last parting.

"Now," she said, with as near an approach to archness as a woman of her type is capable of, "you must not think me odd if I do something that may seem to you a little bit unconventional. It is only your own kindness to me which encourages me to ask a



favor, which I shouldn't wonder if you would rather grant than not. The fact is, there is a gentleman who wishes very much to dance with me, and my card is already full. Now, would you mind giving up one of yours? I know, in the first place, that it was from a sense of duty that—that—that you took so many," she finished desperately, as I refused to come to her aid.



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“We will not discuss my motives, Fraulein,” I said, with as much friendliness as I had at my command. “But, before granting your not unreasonable request, you must be good enough to tell me who the gentleman is who is to profit by my sacrifice.”

“His name is Mr. Dannevig. He is a knight of Dannebrog, and moreover, as he tells me, an intimate friend of yours.”

“Tell him, then, Fraulein, that he might have presumed sufficiently upon our friendship to prefer his request in person, instead of sending you as his messenger.”

The color sprang to her cheeks; she swept abruptly around, and with an air of outraged majesty, marched defiantly down the hall.

The night wore on. The hour for supper came, and politeness forced me to go and find Miss Pfeifer. Then we sat down in a corner, and ate and chattered in a heedless, dispirited fashion, dwelling with feigned interest on trifling themes, and as by a tacit agreement avoiding each other’s glances. Then some gentleman came to claim her, and I was almost glad that she was gone. And yet, in the very next moment a passionate regret came over me, as for a personal loss, and I would fain have called her back and told her, with friendly directness my reasons for interfering so rudely with her pleasure.

I do not know how long I sat thus idly nursing my discontent, and now and then, as my anger blazed up, muttering some fierce execration against Dannevig. What was this girl to me, after all? I was certainly not in love with her. And if she chose to ruin herself, what business had I to prevent her? But then, she was a woman, and a sweet and pure and true-hearted woman; it was, at all events, my duty to open her eyes, and I vowed that, even though she should hate me for it, I would tell her the truth. I looked at my watch; it was a few minutes past two. With a sting of self-reproach, I remembered my promise to Mr. Pfeifer, and resolved not to shirk the responsibility I had voluntarily assumed. I hastened up the hall, then down again, surveyed the dancers, sent a girl into the dressing-room with a message; but Fraulein Hildegard was nowhere to be seen. A horrible thought flashed through me. I seized my hat, and rushed down into the restaurant. There, in an inner apartment, divided from the public room by drooping curtains, I found her, laughing and chatting gayly with Dannevig over a glass of Champagne and a dish of ice-cream.

“Fraulein,” I said, approaching her with grave politeness, “I am sorry to be obliged to interrupt this agreeable *tete-a-tete*. But the carriage has arrived, and I must claim the pleasure of your company.”

“Now, really,” she exclaimed, with impulsive regret, while her eyes still hung with a fascinated gaze on Dannevig’s face, “is it, then, so necessary that we should go just

now? Do you really insist upon it? Mr. Dannevig was just telling me some charming adventures of his life in Denmark.”



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"I am happy to say," I answered, "that I am so well familiar with Mr. Dannevig's adventures as to be quite competent to supplement his fragmentary statements. I shall be very happy to continue the entertainment—"

"*Sacr—r-r-e nom de Dieu!*" Dannevig burst forth, leaping up from his seat. "This is more than I can bear!" and he pulled a card from his portmonnaie and flung it down on the table before me. "May I request the honor of a meeting?" he continued, in a calmer voice. "It is high time that we two should settle our difficulties in the only way in which they are capable of adjustment."

"Mr. Dannevig," I replied, with a cool irony which I was far from feeling, "the first rule of the code of honor, to which you appeal, is, as you are aware, that the combatants must be equals in birth and station. Now, you boast of being of royal blood, while I have no such claim to distinction. You see, therefore, that your proposition is absurd."

Miss Hildegard had in the meanwhile risen to take my proffered arm, and with a profound bow to the indignant hero we moved out of the room. During our homeward ride hardly a word was spoken; the wheels rattled away over the uneven pavement and the coachman snapped his whip, while we sat in opposite corners of the carriage, each pursuing his or her own lugubrious train of thought. But as we had mounted together the steps to Mr. Pfeifer's mansion, and I was applying her latchkey to the lock, she suddenly held out her hand to me, and I grasped it eagerly and held it close in mine.

"Really," she said in a tone of conciliation, "I like you too well to wish to quarrel with you. Won't you please tell me candidly why you objected to my dancing with Mr. Dannevig?"

"With all my heart," I responded warmly; "if you will give me the opportunity. In the meanwhile you will have to accept my reasons on trust, and believe that they were very weighty. You may feel assured that I should not have run the risk of offending you, if I had not felt convinced that Dannevig is a man whose acquaintance no young lady can claim with impunity. I have known him for many years, and I do not speak rashly."

"I am afraid you are a very severe judge," she murmured sadly. "Good-night."

## VII.

During the next months many rumors of Dannevig's excesses reached me from various sources. He had obtained a position as interpreter for one of the Immigration Companies, and made semi-monthly excursions to Quebec, taking charge of the immigrants, and conducting them to Chicago. The opportunity for revealing his past history to Miss Pfeifer somehow never presented itself, although I continued to call frequently, and spent many delightful evenings with her and her uncle. However, I

consoled myself with the reflection that the occasion for such a revelation no longer existed, and I had no desire needlessly to persecute a man



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whose iniquities could, at all events, harm no one but himself. And still, knowing from experience his talent for occult diplomacy, I took the precaution (without even remotely implicating Miss Hildegard) to put Mr. Pfeifer on his guard. One evening, as we were sitting alone in his library enjoying a confidential smoke, I related to him, merely as part of the secret history of our paper, some of Dannevig's questionable exploits while in our employ. Pfeifer was hugely entertained, and swore that Dannevig was the most interesting rascal he had ever heard of.

A few days later I was surprised by a call from Dannevig, who seemed again to be in the full bloom of prosperity. And yet, that inexpressible flavor of aristocracy, and that absolute fineness of type which at our first meeting had so fascinated me, had undergone some subtle change which was almost too fleeting for words to express. To put it bluntly, he had not borne transplantation well. Like the finest European grapes, he had thriven in our soil, but turned out a coarser product than nature intended. He talked with oppressive brilliancy about everything under the sun, patronized me (as indeed he had always done), and behaved with a certain effusive amiability, the impudence of which was simply masterly.

"By the way," he cried, with fine unconcern, "speaking of beer, how is your friend, Miss Pfeifer? Her old man, I believe, owns a good deal of stock in this paper, quite a controlling interest, I am told."

"It will not pay to make love to her on that ground, Dannevig," I answered, gravely, knowing well enough that he had come on a diplomatic errand. "Mr. Pfeifer is, in the first place, not her father, and secondly, he has at least a dozen other heirs."

"Make love to Miss Pfeifer!" he exclaimed, with a hearty laugh. "Why, I should just as soon think of making love to General Grant! Taking her all in all, bodily and mentally, there is a certain Teutonic heaviness and tenacity about her—a certain professorial ponderosity of thought which would give me a nightmare. She is the innocent result of twenty generations of beer-drinking."

"Suppose we change the subject, Dannevig," I interrupted, rather impatiently.

"Well, if you are not the oddest piece I ever did come across!" he replied, laughingly. "You don't suppose she is a saint, do you?"

"Yes, I do!" I thundered, "and you would greatly oblige by never mentioning her name again in my presence, or I might be tempted to do what I might regret."

"Heavens!" he cried, laying hold of the door-knob. "I didn't know you were in your dangerous mood to-day. You might at least have given a fellow warning. Suppose,



henceforth, when you have your bad days, you post a placard on the door, with the inscription: 'Dangerous—must not be crossed.' Then I might know when not to call. Good-morning."

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On the lake shore, a short distance north of Lincoln Park, Mr. Pfeifer had a charming little villa where he spent the summer months in idyllic drowsiness, exhibiting a spasmodic interest in the culture of European grapes. Here I found myself one Saturday evening in the middle of June, having accepted the owner's invitation to stay over Sunday with him. I rang the door-bell, and inquired for Mr. Pfeifer. He had unexpectedly been called in to town, the servant informed me, but would return presently; the young lady I would probably find in the garden. As I was not averse to a *tete-a-tete* with Miss Hildegard just then, I threaded my way carefully among the flower-beds, whose gorgeous medley of colors gleamed indistinctly through the twilight. A long bar of deep crimson traced itself along the western horizon, and here and there a star was struggling out from the faint, blue, nocturnal dimness. Green and red and yellow lights dotted the surface of the lake, and the waves beat, with a slow, gurgling rhythm, against the strand beneath the garden fence; now and then the irrational shrieks of some shrill-voiced little steamer broke in upon the stillness like an inappropriately lively remark upon a solemn conversation. I had half forgotten my purpose, and was walking aimlessly on, when suddenly I was startled by the sound of human voices, issuing apparently from a dense arbor of grape-vines at the lower end of the walk.

"Why will you not believe me, darling?" some one was saying. A great rush of emotion—fear, anguish, hatred, shook my very soul. "Your scepticism would make Tyndall tear his hair. Angels have no business to be so sceptical. You are always doubting me, always darkening my life by your irrational fears."

"But, Victor," answered another voice, which was none other than Hildegard's, "he is certainly a very good man, and would not tell me anything he believed to be untrue. Why, then, did he warn me so solemnly against you? Even though I love you, I cannot help feeling that there is something in your past which you hide from me."

"If you will listen to that white-livered hypocrite, it is useless for me to try to convince you. But, if you must know it,—though, mind you, I tell you this only because you compel me,—I once interfered, because my conscience forced me to do so, in a very disgraceful love-affair of his in Denmark. He has hated me ever since, and is now taking his vengeance. I will give you the details some other time. Now, are you satisfied?"

"No, Victor, no. I am not. It is not because I have been listening to others, that I torment you with these ungrateful questions. Sometimes a terrible dread comes over me, and though my heart rebels against it, I cannot conquer it. I feel as if some dark memory, some person, either living or dead, were standing between us, and would ever keep you away from me. It is terrible, Victor, but I feel it even now."



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“And then all my love, my first and only abiding passion, my life, which I would gladly lay down at your feet—all goes for naught, merely because a foolish dream has taken possession of you. Ah, you are ill, my darling, you are nervous.”

“No, no, do not kiss me. Not to-night, Victor, not to-night.”

The horrible discovery had completely stunned me. I stood as if spell-bound, and could neither stir nor utter a sound. But a sudden rustling of the leaves within broke through the torpor of my senses, and, with three great strides, I stood at the entrance to the arbor. Dannevig, instantly recognizing me, slipped dexterously out, and in the next moment I heard him leaping over the fence, and running away over the crisp sand. Miss Hildegard stood still and defiant before me in the twilight, and the audible staccato of her breath revealed to my ears the agitation which the deepening shadows hid from my eyes. An overwhelming sense of compassion came over me, as for one who had sustained a mortal hurt that was beyond the power of healing. Alas, that simplicity and uprightness of soul, and the boasted womanly intuitions, should be such poor safeguards against the wiles of the serpent! And yet, I knew that to argue with her at this moment would be worse than vain.

“Fraulein,” I said, walking close up to her, and laying my hand lightly on her arm, “with all my heart I deplore this.”

“Pray, do not inconvenience yourself with any such superfluous emotion,” she answered, in a tone, the forced hauteur of which was truly pathetic. “I wish to hear no accusations of Mr. Dannevig from your mouth. What he does not choose to tell me himself, I will hear from no one else.”

“I have not volunteered any revelations, Fraulein,” I observed. “Moreover, I see you are posing for your own personal gratification. You wish to convince yourself of your constancy by provoking an attack from me. When love has reached that stage, Miss Hildegard, then the patient is no longer absolutely incurable. Now, to convince you that I am right, will you have the kindness to look me straight in the eyes and tell me that there is no shadow of doubt in your heart as to Mr. Dannevig’s truthfulness; that, in other words, you believe that on one occasion he assumed the attitude of indignant virtue toward me, and in holy horror rebuked my profligacy. Dare you meet my eye, and tell me that?”

“Yes,” she exclaimed, boldly stepping out into the moonlight, and meeting my eye with a steady gaze; but slowly and gradually the tears *would* gather, her underlip *would* quiver, and with a sudden movement she turned around, and burst out weeping.

“Oh, no! I cannot! I cannot!” she sobbed, sinking down upon the green sod.



I stood long gazing mournfully at her, while the sobs shook her frame; there was a child-like, hearty *abandon* in her grief, which eased my mind, for it told me that her infatuation was not so hopeless, nor her hurt so great as I had feared.



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The next evening when dinner was at an end, Mr. Pfeifer proposed a walk in the park. Hildegard pleaded a headache, and wished to be excused.

“Nonsense, child,” said Pfeifer, with his usual good-humored peremptoriness. “If you have a headache, so much the more ought you to go. Put on your things now, and don’t keep us waiting any longer than you can help.”

Hildegard submitted with demure listlessness, and soon re-appeared in her walking costume.

The daylight had faded, and the evening was in its softest, most ethereal mood. The moon was drifting lazily among the light summer clouds, gazing down upon the many-voiced tumult of the crowded city, with that calm philosophic abstraction which always characterizes the moon, as if she, up there in her airy heights, were so infinitely exalted above all the distracting problems and doubts that harass our poor human existence. We entered a concert garden, which was filled with gayly dressed pleasure seekers; somewhere under the green roof of the trees an orchestra was discoursing strains of German music to a Teutonic audience.

“*Donnerwetter!*” said Pfeifer, enthusiastically; “that is the symphony in *E flat*; pretty well rendered too. Only hear that”—and he began to whistle the air softly, with lively gesticulations “Come, let us go nearer and listen.”

“No, let us stay here, uncle,” remonstrated Hildegard. “I don’t think it is quite nice to go so near. They are drinking beer there, and there are so many horrible people.”

“Nonsense, child! Where did you get all those silly whims from? Where it is respectable for your uncle to go, I am sure it won’t hurt you to follow.”

We made our way through the throng, and stationed ourselves under a tree, from which we had a full survey of the merry company, seated at small tables, with huge foam-crowned mugs of beer before them. Suddenly a voice, somewhat louder than the rest, disentangled itself from the vague, inarticulate buzz, which filled the air about us. Swift as a flash my eyes darted in the direction from which the voice came. There, within a few dozen steps from us, sat Dannevig between two gaudily attired women; another man was seated at the opposite side of the table, and between them stood a couple of bottles and several half-filled glasses. The sight was by no means new to me, and still, in that moment, it filled me with unspeakable disgust. The knight of Dannebrog was as charmingly free-and-easy as if he were nestled securely in the privacy of his own fireside; his fine plumes were deplorably ruffled, his hat thrust back, and his hair hanging in tangled locks down over his forehead; his eyes were heavy, and a smile of maudlin happiness played about his mouth.



“Now, don’t make yourself precious, my dear,” he was saying, laying his arm affectionately around the waist of the woman on his right. “I like German kisses. I speak from experience. Angels have no business to be—”



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"*Himmel*, what is the matter with the child," cried Pfeifer, in a voice of alarm. "Why, my dear, you tremble all over. I ought not to have made you go out with that headache. Wait here while I run for some water."

Before I could offer my services, he was gone, leaving me alone with Hildegard.

"Let us go," she whispered, with a long, shuddering sigh, turning a white face, full of fright, disgust, and pitiful appeal toward me.

"Shall we not wait for your uncle?" I asked.

"Oh, I cannot. Let us go," she repeated, seizing my arm, and clinging convulsively to me.

We walked slowly away, and were soon overtaken by Mr. Pfeifer.

"How do you feel now, child?" he inquired anxiously.

"Oh, I feel—I feel—unclean," she whispered and shuddered again.

### VIII.

Two years passed, during which I completely lost sight of Dannevig. I learned that he had been dismissed from the service of the Immigration Company; that he played second violin for a few months at one of the lowest city theatres, and finally made a bold stroke for fame by obtaining the Democratic nomination for County Clerk. I was faithless enough, however, to call attention to the fact that he had never been naturalized, whereupon, a new caucus was called, and another candidate was put into the field.

The Pfeifers I continued to see frequently, and, at last, at Hildegard's own suggestion, told her the story I had so long withheld from her. She showed very little emotion, but sat pale and still with her hands folded in her lap, gazing gravely at me. When I had finished, she arose, walked the length of the room, then returned, and stopped in front of me.

"Human life seems at times a very flimsy affair, doesn't it?" she said, appealing to me again with her direct gaze.

"Yes, if one takes a cynical view of it," I answered.

She stood for a while pondering.

"Did I ever know that man?" she asked, looking up abruptly.



“You know best.”

“Then it must have been very, very long ago.”

A slight shiver ran through her frame. She shook my hand silently, and left the room.

One evening in the summer of 1870, just as the news from the Franco-Prussian war was arousing the enthusiasm of our Teutonic fellow-citizens, I was sauntering leisurely homeward, pondering with much satisfaction on the course history was taking. About half a mile from the Clark street bridge I found my progress checked by a crowd of men who had gathered on the sidewalk outside of a German saloon, and were evidently discussing some exciting topic. My journalistic instincts prompted me to stop and listen to the discussion.

“Poor fellow, I guess he is done for,” some one was saying. “But they were both drunk; you couldn’t expect anything else.”

“Is any one hurt?” I asked, addressing my next neighbor in the crowd.



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“Yes. It was a poor fool of a Dane. He got into a row with somebody about the war. Said he would undertake to whip ten Deutchers single-handed; that he had done so many a time in the Schleswig-Holstein war. Then there was some fighting, and he was shot.”

I spoke a few words to the policeman at the door, and was admitted. The saloon was empty but in the billiard-room at its rear I saw a doctor in his shirt-sleeves, bending over a man who lay outstretched on a billiard-table. A bartender was standing by with a basin of water and a bloody towel.

“Do you know his name?” I inquired of the police officer.

“They used to call him Danish Bill,” he answered. “Have known him for a good while. Believe his real name was Danborg, or Dan—something.”

“Not Dannevig?” I cried.

“Dannevig? Yes, I guess you have got it.”

I hastily approached the table. There lay Dannevig—but I would rather not describe him. It was hard to believe it, but this heavy-lidded, coarse-skinned, red-veined countenance bore a cruel, caricatured resemblance to the clean-cut, exquisitely modelled face of the man I had once called my friend. A death-like stupor rested upon his features; his eyes were closed, but his mouth half open.

“By Jove!” exclaimed the physician, in a burst of professional enthusiasm, “what a splendid animal he must have been! Hardly saw a better made man in all my life.”

“But he is not dead!” I protested, somewhat anxiously.

“No; but he has no chance, that I can see. May last over to-morrow, but hardly longer. Does any one know where he lodges?”

No one answered.

“But, *Himmel!* he cannot stay here.” The voice was the bartender’s, but it seemed to be addressed to no one in particular.

“I have known him for years,” I said. “Take him to my rooms; they are only a dozen blocks away.”

A carriage was sent for, and away we drove, the doctor and I, slowly, cautiously, holding the still unconscious man between us. We laid him on my bed, and the doctor departed, promising to return before morning.



A little after midnight Dannevig became restless, and as I went to his side, opened his eyes with a look of full, startled consciousness.

“I’m about played out, old fellow, aint I?” he groaned.

I motioned to him to be silent.

“No,” he went on, in a strained whisper, “it is no use now. I know well enough how I stand. You needn’t try to fool me.”

He lay for a while motionless, while his eyes wandered restlessly about the room. He made an effort to speak, but his words were inaudible. I stooped over him, laying my ear to his mouth.

“Can—can you lend me five dollars?”

I nodded.

“You will find—a pawnbroker’s check—in my vest pocket,” he continued. “The address is—is—on it. Redeem it. It is a ring. Send it—to—to the Countess von Brehm—with—with—my compliments,” he finished with a groan.

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We spent several hours in silence. About three o'clock the doctor paid a brief visit; and I read in his face that the end was near. The first sunbeams stole through the closed shutters and scattered little quivering fragments of light upon the carpet. A deep stillness reigned about us. As I sat watching the defaced ruin of what had been, to me at least, one of the noblest forms which a human spirit ever inhabited, the past moved in a vivid retrospect before my eye, and many strange reflections thronged upon me. Presently Dannevig called me and I stood again bowing over him.

"When you—bury me," he said in a broken whisper. "Carry my—cross of—Dannebrog—on a cushion after me." And again after a moment's pause: "I have—made a—nice mess of it, haven't I? I—I—think it would—have—have been better for—me, if—I had been—somebody else."

Within an hour he was dead. Myself and two policemen followed him to the grave; and the cross of Dannebrog, with a much soiled red ribbon, was carried on a velvet cushion after his coffin.

## MABEL AND I.

(A PHILOSOPHICAL FAIRY TALE.)

### I.

"I want to see things as they are," said I to Mabel.

"I don't see how else you can see them," answered Mabel, with a laugh. "You certainly don't see them as they are not."

"Yes, I do," said I. "I see men and things only as they *seem*. It is so exasperating to think that I can never get beyond the surface of anything. My friends may appear very good and beautiful to me, and yet I may all the while have a suspicion that the appearance is deceitful, that they are really neither good nor beautiful."

"In case that was so, I shouldn't want to know it," said Mabel. "It would make me very unhappy."

"That is where you and I differ," said I.

Mabel was silent for a moment, and I believe she was a little hurt, for I had spoken rather sharply.

"But what good would it do you, Jamie?" asked she, looking up at me from under her wide-brimmed straw hat.



“What would do me good?” said I, for I had quite forgotten what we had been talking about.

“To see things as they are. There is my father now; he knows a great deal, and I am sure I shouldn’t care to know any more than he does.”

“Well, that is where you and I differ,” said I again.

“I wish you wouldn’t be always saying ‘that is where you and I differ.’ Somehow I don’t like to hear you say it. It doesn’t sound like yourself.”

And Mabel turned away from me, took up a leaf from the ground and began to pick it to pieces.



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We were sitting, at the time when this conversation took place, up in the gorge not half a mile from the house where Mabel's father lived. I was a tutor in the college, about twenty-three years old, and I was very fond of German philosophy. And now, since I have told who I was, I suppose I ought to tell you something about Mabel. Mabel was, —but really it is impossible to say what she was, except that she was very, very charming. As for the rest, she was the daughter of Professor Markham, and I had known her since my college days when she was quite a little girl. And now she wore long dresses; and, what was more, she had her hair done up in a sort of Egyptian pyramid on the top of her head. The dress she had on to-day I was particularly fond of; it was of a fine light texture, and the pattern was an endless repetition of a small, sweet-brier bud, with two delicate green leaves attached to it.

I had spread a shawl out on the ground where Mabel was sitting, for fear she should soil her fine dress. A large weeping-willow spread its branches all around us, and drooped until it almost touched the ground, so that it made a sort of green, sunlit summer-house, for Mabel and me to live in. Between the rocks at our feet a clear brook came rushing down, throwing before it little showers of spray, which fell like crystal pearls on the water, sailed down the swift eddies and then vanished in the next whirlpool. A couple of orioles in brand-new yellow uniforms, with black epaulets on their shoulders, were busy in the tree over our heads, but stopped now and then in their work to refresh themselves with a little impromptu duet.

“Work and play  
Make glad the day,”—

that seemed to be their philosophy, and Mabel and I were quite ready to agree with them, although we had been idling since the early dawn. But then it was so long since we had seen each other, that we thought we could afford it.

“Somehow,” said Mabel at last (for she never could pout long at a time), “I don't like you so well since you came back from Germany. You are not as nice as you used to be. What did you go there for, anyway?”

“Why,” I responded, quite seriously, “I went there to study; and I did learn a good deal there, although naturally I was not as industrious as I might have been.”

“I can readily believe that. But, tell me, what did you learn that you mightn't just as well have learned at home?”

I thought it was no use in being serious any longer; so I tossed a pebble into the water, glanced up into Mabel's face and answered gayly:

“Well, I learned something about gnomes and pigmies and elves and fairies and salamanders, and—”



“And what?” interrupted Mabel, impatiently.

“And salamanders,” repeated I. “You know the forests and rivers and mountains of Germany are full of all sorts of strange sprites, and you know the people believe in them, and that is one of the things which make life in the Old World so fascinating. But here we are too prosy and practical and business-like, and we don’t believe in anything except what we can touch with our hands, and see with our eyes, and sell for money.”



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“Now, Jamie, that is not true,” responded Mabel, energetically; for she was a strong American at heart, and it didn’t take much to rouse her. “I believe, for instance, that you know a great deal although not as much as my father; but I can’t see your learning with my eyes, neither can I touch it with my hands—”

“But I hope I can sell it for money,” interrupted I, laughing.

“No, joking aside. I don’t think we are quite as bad as you would like to make us out.”

“And then you think, perhaps, that the gnomes and river-sprites would be as apt to thrive here as in the Old World?”

“Who knows?” said Mabel, with an expression that seemed to me half serious and half playful. “But I wish you would tell me something about your German sprites. I am so very ignorant in such things, you know.”

I stretched myself comfortably on the edge of the shawl at Mabel’s feet, and began to tell her the story about the German peasant who caught the gnome that had robbed his wheat-field.

“The gnomes wear tiny red caps,” I went on, “which make them invisible. They are called tarn-caps, or caps of darkness. The peasant that I am telling about had a suspicion that it was the gnomes who had been stealing his wheat. One evening, he went out after sunset (for the gnomes never venture out from their holes until the sun is down) and began to fight in the air with his cane about the borders of the field. Then suddenly he saw a very tiny man with knee-breeches and large frightened eyes, turning a somersault in the grass right at his feet. He had struck off his cap, and then, of course, the gnome was no longer invisible. The peasant immediately seized the cap and put it into his pocket; the gnome begged and implored to get it back, but instead of that, the peasant caught him up in his arms and carried him to his house, where he kept him as a captive until the other gnomes sent a herald to him and offered him a large ransom. Then the gnome was again set free and the peasant made his fortune by the transaction.”

“Wouldn’t it be delightful if such things could ever happen here?” exclaimed Mabel, while her beautiful eyes shone with pleasure at the very thought.

“I should think so,” said I. “It is said, too, that if there are gnomes and elves in the neighborhood, they always gather around you when you talk about them.”

“Really?” And Mabel sent a timid glance in among the large mossy trunks of the beeches and pines.

“Tell me something more, Jamie,” she demanded, eagerly.



Mabel had such a charming way of saying “Jamie,” that I could never have opposed a wish of hers, whatever it might be. The professor called me James, and among my friends I was Jim; but it was only Mabel who called me Jamie. So I told her all I knew about the nixies, who sang their strange songs at midnight in the water; about the elves, who lived in the roses and lilies, and danced in a ring around



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the tall flowers until the grass never grew there again; and about the elf-maiden who led the knight astray when he was riding to his bride on his wedding-day. And all the while Mabel's eyes seemed to be growing larger; the blood burned in her cheeks, and sometimes she shuddered, although the afternoon was very warm. When I had finished my tale, I rose and seated myself at her side. The silence suddenly seemed quite oppressive; it was almost as if we could hear it. For some reason neither Mabel nor I dared to speak; but we both strained our ears listening to something, we did not know what. Then there came a strange soft whisper which filled the air all about us, and I thought I heard somebody calling my name.

"They are calling you, Jamie," whispered Mabel.

"Calling me? Who?" said I.

"Up there in the tree. No, not there. It is down in the brook. Everywhere."

"Oh," cried I, with a forced laugh. "We are two great children, Mabel. It is nothing."

Suddenly all was silent once more; but the wood-stars and violets at my feet gazed at me with such strange, wistful eyes, that I was almost frightened.

"You shouldn't have done that, Jamie," said Mabel. "You killed them."

"Killed what?"

"The voices, the strange, small voices."

"My dear girl," said I, as I took Mabel's hands and helped her to rise. "I am afraid we are both losing our senses. Come, let us go. The sun is already down. It must be after tea-time."

"But you know we were talking about them," whispered she, still with the same fascinated gaze in her eyes. "Ah, there, take care! Don't step on that violet. Don't you see how its mute eyes implore you to spare its life?"

"Yes, dear, I see," answered I; and I drew Mabel's arm through mine, and we hurried down the wood-path, not daring to look back, for we had both a feeling as if some one was walking close behind us, in our steps.



## II.

It was a little after ten, I think, when I left the professor's house, where I had been spending the evening, and started on my homeward way.

As I walked along the road the thought of Mabel haunted me. I wondered whether I ever should be a professor, like her father, and ended with concluding that the next best thing to being one's self a professor would be to be a professor's son-in-law. But, somehow, I wasn't at all sure that Mabel cared anything about me.

"Things are not what they seem," I murmured to myself, "and the real Mabel may be a very different creature from the Mabel whom I know."



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There was not much comfort in that thought, but nevertheless I could not get rid of it. I glanced up to the big round face of the moon, which had a large ring of mist about its neck; and looking more closely I thought I saw a huge floundering body, of which the moon was the head, crawling heavily across the sky, and stretching a long misty arm after me. I hurried on, not caring to look right or left; and I suppose I must have taken the wrong turn, for as I lifted my eyes, I found myself standing under the willow-tree at the creek where Mabel and I had been sitting in the afternoon. The locusts, with their shrill metallic voices, kept whirring away in the grass, and I heard their strange hissing sh-h-h-h-h, now growing stronger, then weakening again, and at last stopping abruptly, as if to say: "Didn't I do well?" But the blue-eyed violets shook their heads, and that means in their language: "No, I don't think so at all." The water, which descended in three successive falls into the wide, dome-shaped gorge, seemed to me, as I stood gazing at it, to be going the wrong way, crawling, with eager, foamy hands, up the ledges of the rock to where I was standing.

"I must certainly be mad," thought I, "or I am getting to be a poet."

In order to rid myself of the painful illusion, which was every moment getting more vivid, I turned my eyes away and hurried up along the bank, while the beseeching murmur of the waters rang in my ears.

As I had ascended the clumsy wooden stairs which lead up to the second fall, I suddenly saw two little blue lights hovering over the ground directly in front of me.

"Will-o'-the-wisps," said I to myself. "The ground is probably marshy."

I pounded with my cane on the ground, but, as I might have known, it was solid rock. It was certainly very strange. I flung myself down behind the trunk of a large hemlock. The two blue lights came hovering directly toward me. I lifted my cane,—with a swift blow it cut the air, and,—who can imagine my astonishment? Right in front of me I saw a tiny man, not much bigger than a good-sized kitten, and at his side lay a small red cap; the cap, of course, I immediately snatched up and put it in a separate apartment in my pocket-book to make sure that I should not lose it. One of the lights hastened away to the rocks and vanished before I could overtake it.

There was something so very funny in the idea of finding a gnome in the State of New York, that the strange fear which had possessed me departed and I felt very much inclined to laugh. My blow had quite stunned the poor little creature; he was still lying half on his back, as if trying to raise himself on his elbows, and his large black eyes had a terrified stare in them, and seemed to be ready to spring out of their sockets.

"Give—give me back my cap," he gasped at last, in a strange metallic voice, which sounded to me like the clinking of silver coins.



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“Not so fast, my dear,” said I. “What will you give me for it?”

“Anything,” he cried, as he arose and held out his small hand.

“Then listen to me,” continued I. “Can you help me to see things as they are? In that case I shall give you back your cap, but on no other condition.”

“See things as they are?” repeated the gnome, wonderingly.

“Yes, and not only as they seem,” rejoined I, with emphasis.

“Return here at midnight,” began he, after a long silence. “Upon the stone where you are sitting you shall find what you want. If you take it, leave my cap on the same spot.”

“That is a fair bargain,” said I. “I shall be here promptly at twelve. Good-night.”

I had extended my palm to shake hands with my new friend, but he seemed to resent my politeness; with a sort of snarl, he turned a somersault and rolled down the hill-side to where the rocks rise from the water.

I need not say that I kept my promise about returning. And what did I find? A pair of spectacles of the most exquisite workmanship; the glasses so clear as almost to deceive the sight, and the bows of gold spun into fine elastic threads.

“We shall soon see what they are good for,” thought I, as I put them into the silver case, the wonderful finish of which I could hardly distinguish by the misty light of the moon.

The little tarn-cap I, of course, left on the stone. As I wandered homeward through the woods, I thought, with a certain fierce triumph, that now the beauty of Mabel’s face should no more deceive me.

“Now, Mabel,” I murmured, “now I shall see you as you are.”

### III.

At three o’clock in the afternoon I knocked at the door of the professor’s study.

“Come in,” said the professor.

“Is—is Mabel at home?” asked I, when I had shaken hands with the professor and seated myself in one of his hard, straight-backed chairs.

“She will be down presently,” answered he “There is *The Nation*. You may amuse yourself with that until she comes.”



I took up the paper; but the spectacles seemed to be burning in my breast-pocket, and although I stared intently at the print, I could hardly distinguish a word. What if I tried the power of the spectacles on the professor? The idea appeared to me a happy one, and I immediately proceeded to put it into practice. With a loudly beating heart, I pulled the silver case from my pocket, rubbed the glasses with my handkerchief, put them on my nose, adjusted the bows behind my ears, and cast a stealthy glance at the professor over the edge of my paper. But what was my horror! It was no longer the professor at all. It was a huge parrot, a veritable parrot in slippers and dressing-gown! I dared hardly believe my senses. Was the professor *really* not a man, but a parrot? My dear trusted and honored teacher, whom I had always looked upon as the wisest and most learned of living men, could it be possible that *he* was a parrot? And still there he sat, grave and sedate, a pair of horn spectacles on his large, crooked beak, a few stiff feathers bristling around his bald crown, and his small eyes blinking with a sort of meaningless air of confidence, as I often had seen a parrot's eyes doing.



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“My gnome has been playing a trick on me,” I thought. “This is certainly not to see things as they are. If I only had his tarn-cap once more, he should not recover it so cheaply.”

“Well, my boy,” began the professor, as he wheeled round in his chair, and knocked the ashes out of his pipe on the polished andirons which adorned the empty fire-place. “How is the world using you? Getting over your German whims, eh?”

Surely the spectacles must in some mysterious way have affected my ears too. The professor’s voice certainly did sound very curious—very much like the croak of some bird that had learned human language, but had no notion of what he was saying. The case was really getting serious. I threw the paper away, stared my teacher full in the face, but was so covered with confusion that I could hardly utter two coherent words.

“Yes, yes,—certainly,—professor,” I stammered. “German whims?—I mean things as they are—and—and not as they seem—*das Ding an sich*—beg your pardon—I am not sure, I—I comprehended your meaning—beg your pardon?”

“My dear boy,” croaked the professor, opening his beak in great bewilderment, and showing a little thick red tongue, which curved upward like that of a parrot, “you are certainly not well. Mabel! Mabel! Come down! James is ill! Yes, you certainly look wretchedly. Let me feel your pulse.”

I suppose my face must have been very much flushed, for the blood had mounted to my head and throbbed feverishly in my temples. As I heard the patter of Mabel’s feet in the hall, a great dread came over me. What if she too should turn out to be somebody else—a strange bird or beast? No, not for all the world would I see Mabel—the dear, blessed Mabel—any differently from what she had always seemed to me. So I tore the spectacles from my nose, and crammed them into the case, which again I thrust into my pocket. In the same instant Mabel’s sweet face appeared in the door.

“Did you call me, papa?” she said; then, as she saw me reclining on the sofa, where her father (now no longer a parrot) had forced me to lie down, there came a sudden fright into her beautiful eyes, and she sprang to my side and seized my hand in hers.

“Are you ill, Jamie?” she asked, in a voice of unfeigned anxiety, which went straight to my heart. “Has anything happened to you?”

“Hush, hush!” said the professor. “Don’t make him speak. It might have proved a serious attack. Too much studying, my dear—too much studying. To be sure, the ambition of young men nowadays is past belief. It was different in my youth. Then, every young man was satisfied if he could only make a living—found a home for himself, and bring up his family in the fear of God. But now, dear me, such things are mere nursery ambitions.”



I felt wretched and guilty in my heart! To be thus imposing upon two good people, who loved me and were willing to make every sacrifice for my comfort! Mabel had brought a pillow, and put it under my head; and now she took out some sort of crochet-work, and seated herself on a chair close by me. The professor stood looking at his watch and counting my pulse-beats.



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“One hundred and five,” he muttered, and shook his bald head. “Yes, he has fever. I saw it at once, as he entered the room.”

“Professor,” I cried out, in an agony of remorse, “really I meant nothing by it. I know very well that you are not a parrot—that you are—”

“I—I—a parrot!” he exclaimed, smiling knowingly at Mabel. “No, I should think not. He is raving, my dear. High fever. Just what I said. Won’t you go out and send Maggie for the doctor? No, stop, I shall go myself. Then he will be sure to come without delay. It is high time.”

The professor buttoned his coat up to his chin, fixed his hat at the proper angle on the back of his head, and departed in haste.

“How do you feel now, Jamie dear?” said Mabel, after awhile.

“I am very well, I thank you, Mabel,” answered I. “In fact, it is all nonsense. I am not sick at all.”

“Hush, hush! you must not talk so much,” demanded she, and put her hand over my mouth.

My excitement was now gradually subsiding, and my blood was returning to its usual speed.

“If you don’t object, Mabel,” said I, “I’ll get up and go home. There’s nothing whatever the matter with me.”

“Will you be a good boy and keep quiet,” rejoined she, emphasizing each word by a gentle tap on my head with her crochet-needle.

“Well, if it can amuse you to have me lying here and playing sick,” muttered I, “then, of course, I will do anything to please you.”

“That is right,” said she, and gave me a friendly nod.

So I lay still for a long while, until I came once more to think of my wonderful spectacles, which had turned the venerable professor into a parrot. I thought I owed Mabel an apology for what I had done to her father, and I determined to ease my mind by confiding the whole story to her.

“Mabel,” I began, raising myself on my elbow, “I want to tell you something, but you must promise me beforehand that you will not be angry with me.”



“Angry with you, Jamie?” repeated she, opening her bright eyes wide in astonishment. “I never was angry with you in my life.”

“Very well, then. But I have done something very bad, and I shall never have peace until I have confided it all to you. You are so very good, Mabel. I wish I could be as good as you are.”

Mabel was about to interrupt me, but I prevented her, and continued:

“Last night, as I was going home from your house, the moonlight was so strangely airy and beautiful, and without quite intending to do it, I found myself taking a walk through the gorge. There I saw some curious little lights dancing over the ground, and I remembered the story of the peasant who had caught the gnome. And do you know what I did?”

Mabel was beginning to look apprehensive.

“No, I can’t imagine what you did,” she whispered.

“Well, I lifted my cane, struck at one of the lights, and, before I knew it, there lay a live gnome on the ground, kicking with his small legs.”



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“Jamie! Jamie!” cried Mabel, springing up and gazing at me, as if she thought I had gone mad.

Then there was an unwelcome shuffling of feet in the hall, the door was opened, and the professor entered with the doctor.

“Papa, papa!” exclaimed Mabel, turning to her father. “Do you know what Jamie says? He says he saw a gnome last night in the gorge, and that—”

“Yes, I did!” cried I, excitedly, and sprang up to seize my hat. “If nobody will believe me, I needn’t stay here any longer. And if you doubt what I have been saying, I can show you—”

“My dear sir,” said the doctor.

“My dear boy,” chimed in the professor, and seized me round the waist to prevent me from escaping.

“My dear Jamie,” implored Mabel, while the tears started to her eyes, “do keep quiet, do!”

The doctor and the professor now forced me back upon the sofa, and I had once more to resign myself to my fate.

“A most singular hallucination,” said the professor, turning his round, good-natured face to the doctor. “A moment ago he observed that I was *not* a parrot, which necessarily must have been suggested by a previous hallucination that I was a parrot.”

The doctor shook his head and looked grave.

“Possibly a very serious case,” said he, “a case of ———,” and he gave it a long Latin name, which I failed to catch. “It is well that I was called in time. We may still succeed in mastering the disease.”

“Too much study?” suggested the professor. “Restless ambition? Night labor—severe application?”

The doctor nodded and tried to look wise. Mabel burst into tears, and I myself, seeing her distress, could hardly refrain from weeping. And still I could not help thinking that it was very sweet to see Mabel’s tears flowing for my sake.

The doctor now sat down and wrote a number of curiously abbreviated Latin words for a prescription, and handed it to the professor, who folded it up and put it into his pocket-book.



Half an hour later, I lay in a soft bed with snowy-white curtains, in a cozy little room upstairs. The shades had been pulled down before the windows, a number of medicine bottles stood on a chair at my bedside, and I began to feel quite like an invalid—and all because I had said (what nobody could deny) that the professor was not a parrot.

#### **IV.**

I soon learned that the easiest way to recover my liberty was to offer no resistance, and to say nothing more about the gnome and the spectacles. Mabel came and sat by my bedside for a few hours every afternoon, and her father visited me regularly three times a day, felt my pulse and gave me a short lecture on moderation in study, on the evil effects of ambition, and on the dangerous tendencies of modern speculation.



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The gnome's spectacles I kept hidden under my pillow, and many a time when Mabel was with me I felt a strong temptation to try their effect upon her. Was Mabel really as good and beautiful as she seemed to me? Often I had my hand on the dangerous glasses, but always the same dread came over me, and my courage failed me. That sweet, fair, beautiful face,—what could it be, if it was not what it seemed? No, no, I loved Mabel too well as she seemed, to wish to know whether she was a delusion or a reality. What good would it do me if I found out that she too was a parrot, or a goose, or any other kind of bird or beast? The fairest hope would go out of my life, and I should have little or nothing left worth living for. I must confess that my curiosity often tormented me beyond endurance, but, as I said, I could never muster courage enough either to conquer it or to yield to it. Thus, when at the end of a week I was allowed to sit up, I knew no more about Mabel's real character than I had known before. I saw that she was patient, kind-hearted, sweet-tempered,—that her comings and goings were as quiet and pleasant as those of the sunlight which now stole in unhindered and again vanished through the uncurtained windows. And, after all, had I not known that always? One thing, however, I now knew better than before, and that was that I never could love anybody as I loved Mabel, and that I hoped some time to make her my wife.

A couple of days elapsed, and then I was permitted to return to my own lonely rooms. And very dreary and desolate did they seem to me after the pleasant days I had spent, playing sick, with Mabel and the professor. I did try once or twice the effect of my spectacles on some of my friends, and always the result was astonishing. Once I put them on in church, and the minister, who had the reputation of being a very pious man, suddenly stood before me as a huge fox in gown and bands. His voice sounded like a sort of a bark, and his long snout opened and shut again in such a funny fashion that I came near laughing aloud. But, fortunately, I checked myself and looked for a moment at a couple of old maids in the pew opposite. And, whether you will believe me or not, they looked exactly like two dressed-up magpies, while the stout old gentleman next to them had the appearance of a sedate and pious turkey-cock. As he took out his handkerchief and blew his nose—I mean his bill—the laughter again came over me, and I had to stoop down in the pew and smother my merriment. An old chum of mine, who was a famous sportsman and a great favorite with the ladies, turned out to be a bulldog, and as he adjusted his neck-tie and pulled up his collar around his thick, hairy neck, I had once more to hide my face in order to preserve my gravity.



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I am afraid, if I had gone on with my observations, I should have lost my faith in many a man and woman whom I had previously trusted and admired, for they were probably not all as good and amiable as they appeared. However, I could not help asking myself, as Mabel had done, what good such a knowledge would, in the end, do me. Was it not better to believe everybody good, until convinced to the contrary, than to distrust everybody and by my suspicion do injustice to those who were really better than they seemed? After all, I thought, these spectacles are making me morbid and suspicious; they are a dangerous and useless thing to possess. I will return them to their real owner.

This, then, was my determination. A little before sunset I started for the gorge, and on my way I met a little girl playing with pebbles at the roadside. My curiosity once more possessed me. I put on the gnome's spectacles and gazed intently at the child. Strange to say no transformation occurred. I took off the glasses, rubbed them with my handkerchief, and put them on once more. The child still remained what it seemed—a child; not a feature was changed. Here, then, was really a creature that was neither more nor less than it seemed. For some inconceivable reason the tears started to my eyes; I took the little girl up in my arms and kissed her. My thoughts then naturally turned to Mabel; I knew in the depth of my heart that she, too, would have remained unchanged. What could she be that was better than her own sweet self—the pure, the beautiful, the blessed Mabel?

When the sun was well set, I sat down under the same hemlock-tree where I had first met the gnome. After half an hour's waiting I again saw the lights advancing over the ground, struck at random at one of them and the small man was once more visible. I did not seize his cap, however, but addressed him in this manner:

“Do you know, you curious Old World sprite, what scrapes your detestable spectacles brought me into? Here they are. Take them back. I don't want to see them again as long as I live.”

In the next moment I saw the precious glasses in the gnome's hand, a broad, malicious grin distorted his features, and before I could say another word, he had snatched up his cap and vanished.

A few days later, Mabel, with her sweet-brier dress on, was again walking at my side along the stream in the gorge, and somehow our footsteps led us to the old willow-tree where we had had out talk about the German gnomes and fairies.

“Suppose, Jamie,” said Mabel, as we seated ourselves on the grass, “that a good fairy should come to you and tell you that your highest wish should be fulfilled. What would you then ask?”



“I would ask,” cried I, seizing Mabel’s hand “that she would give me a good little wife, with blue eyes and golden hair, whose name should be Mabel.”

Mabel blushed crimson and turned her face away from me to hide her confusion.



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"You would not wish to see things as they are, then," whispered she, while the sweetest smile stole over her blushing face.

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed I. "But what would you ask, Mabel?"

"I," answered she, "would ask the fairy to give me a husband who loved me well, if—his name was—Jamie."

A little before supper-time we both stole on tip-toe into the professor's study. He was writing, as usual, and did not notice us. Mabel went up to his chair from behind and gently put her hands over his eyes, and asked if he could guess who it was. He, of course, guessed all the names he could think of, except the right one.

"Papa," said Mabel, at last, restoring to him once more the use of his eyes, "Jamie and I have something we want to tell you."

"And what is it, my dear?" asked the professor, turning round on his chair, and staring at us as if he expected something extraordinary.

"I don't want to say it aloud," said Mabel. "I want to whisper it."

"And I, too," echoed I.

And so we both put our mouths, one on each side, to the professor's ears, and whispered.

"But," exclaimed the old man, as soon as he could recover his breath, "you must bear in mind that life is not a play,—that—that life is not what it seems—"

"No, but Mabel *is*," said I.

"Is,—is what?"

"What she seems," cried I.

And then we both laughed; and the professor kissed Mabel, shook my hand, and at last all laughed.

## HOW MR. STORM MET HIS DESTINY.

### I.

Huet' dich vor Maegdelein,  
Soehnelein, Soehnelein.—HEINE.



I do not know why people always spoke of my friend Edmund Storm as a confirmed bachelor, considering the fact that he was not far on the shady side of thirty. It is true, he looked considerably older, and had to all appearances entered that bloomless and sapless period which with women is called "uncertain age." Nevertheless, I had a private conviction that Storm might some fine day shed this dry and shrunken chrysalis, and emerge in some brilliant and unexpected form. I cannot imagine what ground I had for such a belief; I only know that I always felt called upon to combat the common illusion that he was by nature and temperament set apart for eternal celibacy, or even that he had ceased to be agitated by matrimonial aspirations. I dimly felt that there was a sort of refined cruelty in thus excluding a man from the common lot of the race; men often have pity but seldom love for those who either from eccentricity or peculiar excellence separate themselves from the broad, warm current of human life, having no part in the errors, ideals, and aspirations of their more commonplace brethren. Even a slight deviation from the physical type of common manhood and womanhood, as for instance, the possession of a sixth toe or finger, would in the eyes of the multitude go far toward making a man morally objectionable. It was, perhaps, because I wished to save my friend Storm from this unenviable lot that I always contended that he was yet a promising candidate for matrimony.

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Edmund Storm was a Norseman by birth, but had emigrated some five or six years before I made his acquaintance. Our first meeting was brought about in rather a singular manner. I had written an article in one of our leading newspapers, commenting upon the characteristics of our Scandinavian immigrants and indulging some fine theories, highly eulogistic of the women of my native land. A few days after the publication of this article, my pride was seriously shocked by the receipt of a letter which told me in almost so many words that I was a conceited fool, with opinions worthy of a bedlam. The writer, who professed to be better informed, added his name and address, and invited me to call upon him at a specified hour, promising to furnish me with valuable material for future treatises on the same subject. My curiosity naturally piqued, and, swallowing my humiliation I determined to obey the summons. I found some satisfaction in the thought that my unknown critic resided in a very unfashionable neighborhood, and mentally put him down as one of those half-civilized boors whom the first breath of our republican air had inflated a good deal beyond their natural dimensions. I was therefore somewhat disconcerted when, after having climbed half a dozen long staircases, I was confronted with a pale, thin man, of calm, gentlemanly bearing, with the unmistakable stamp of culture upon his brow. He shook my hand with grave politeness, and pointing to a huge arm-chair of antediluvian make, invited me to be seated. The large, low-ceiled room was filled with furniture of the most fantastic styles;—tables and chairs with twisted legs and scrolls of tarnished gilt; a solid-looking, elaborately carved *chiffonier*, exhibiting Adam and Eve in airy dishabille, sowing the seeds of mischief for an unborn world; a long mirror in broad gilt frame of the most deliciously quaint rococo, calling up the images of slim, long-waisted ladies and powdered gentlemen with wristbands of ancient lace, silk stockings, and gorgeous coats, *à la Louis XV*. The very air seemed to be filled with the vague musty odor of by-gone times, and the impression grew upon me that I had unawares stepped into a lumber-room, where the eighteenth century was stowed away for safe-keeping.

“You see I have a weakness for old furniture,” explained my host, while his rigid features labored for an instant to adjust themselves into something resembling a smile. I imagined I could hear them creaking faintly in the effort like tissue-paper when crumpled by an unwary hand. I almost regretted my rudeness in having subjected him to the effort. I noticed that he spoke with a slow, laborious enunciation, as if he were fashioning the words carefully in his mouth before making up his mind to emit them. His thin, flexible lips seemed admirably adapted for this purpose.

“It is the only luxury I allow myself,” he continued, seeing that I was yet ill at ease. “My assortment, as you will observe, is as yet a very miscellaneous one, and I do not know that I ever shall be able to complete it.”



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"You are a fortunate man," remarked I, "who can afford to indulge such expensive tastes."

"Expensive," he repeated musingly, as if that idea had never until then occurred to him. "You are quite mistaken. Expensive, as I understand the term, is not that which has a high intrinsic worth, but that which can only be procured at a price considerably above its real value. In this sense, a hobby is not an expensive thing. It is, as I regard it, one of the safest investments life has to offer. An unambitious man like myself, without a hobby, would necessarily be either an idler or a knave. And I am neither the one nor the other. The truth is, my life was very poorly furnished at the start, and I have been laboring ever since to supply the deficiency. I am one of those crude colorless, superfluous products which Nature throws off with listless ease in her leisure moments when her thoughts are wandering and her strength has been exhausted by some great and noble effort."

Mr. Storm uttered these extraordinary sentiments, not with a careless toss of the head, and loud demonstrative ardor, but with a grave, measured intonation, as if he were reciting from some tedious moral book recommended by ministers of the gospel and fathers of families. His long, dry face, with its perpendicular wrinkles, and the whole absurd proportion between his longitude and latitude, suggested to me the idea that Nature had originally made him short and stout, and then, having suddenly changed her mind, had subjected him to a prolonged process of stretching in order to adapt him to the altered type. I had no doubt that if I could see those parts of his body which were now covered, they would show by longitudinal wrinkles the effects of this hypothetical stretching. His features in their original shape may have been handsome, although I am inclined to doubt it; there were glimpses of fine intentions in them, but, as a whole, he was right in pronouncing them rather a second-rate piece of workmanship. His nose was thin, sharp, and aquiline, and the bone seemed to exert a severe strain upon the epidermis, which was stretched over the projecting bridge with the tensity of a drum-head. I will not reveal what an unpleasant possibility this niggardliness on Nature's part suggested to me. His eyes (the only feature in him which was distinctly Norse) were of a warm gray tint, and expressed frank severity. You saw at once that, whatever his eccentricities might be, here was a Norseman in whom there was no guile. It was these fine Norse eyes which at once prepossessed me in Storm's favor. They furnished me approximately with the key-note to his character; I knew that God did not expend such eyes upon any but the rarest natures. Storm's taste for old furniture was no longer a mystery; in fact, I began to suspect that there lurked a fantastic streak of some warm, deep-tinged hue somewhere in his bony composition, and my fingers began to itch with the desire to make a psychological autopsy.



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“Apropos of crude workmanship,” began my host after a pause, during which he had been examining his long fingers with an air of criticism and doubtful approbation. “You know why I wrote to you?”

I confessed that I was unable to guess his motive.

“Well, then, listen to me. Your article was written with a good deal of youthful power; but it was thoroughly false. You spoke of what you did not know. I thought it was my duty to guard you from future errors, especially as I felt that you were a young man standing upon the threshold of life, about to enter upon a career of great mischief or great usefulness. Then you are of my own blood—but there is no need of apologies. You have come, as I thought you would.”

“It was especially my sentiments regarding Norsewomen, I believe, that you objected to,” I said hesitatingly; for in spite of his fine eyes, my friend still impressed me as an unknown quantity, and I mentally labelled him  $x$ , and determined by slow degrees to solve his equation.

“Yes,” he answered; “your sentiments about Norsewomen, or rather about women in general. They are made very much of the same stuff the world over. I do not mind telling you that I speak from bitter experience, and my words ought, therefore, to have the more weight.”

“Your experience must have been very wide,” I answered by way of pleasantry, “since, as you hint, it includes the whole world.”

He stared for a moment, did not respond to my smile, but continued in the same imperturbable monotone:

“When God abstracted that seventh or ninth rib from Adam, and fashioned a woman of it, the result was, *entre nous*, nothing to boast of. I have ever ceased to regret that Adam did not wake up in time to thwart that hazardous experiment. It may have been necessary to introduce some tragic element into our lives, and if that was the intention, I admit that the means were ingenious. To my mind the only hope of salvation for the human race lies in its gradual emancipation from that baleful passion which draws men and women so irresistibly to each other. Love and reason in a well-regulated human being, form at best an armed neutrality, but can never cordially co-operate. But few men arrive in this life at this ideal state, and women never. As it is now, our best energies are wasted in vain endeavors to solve the matrimonial problem at the very time when our vitality is greatest and our strength might be expended with the best effect in the service of the race, for the advancement of science, art, or industry.”

“But would you then abolish marriage?” I ventured to ask. “That would mean, as I understand it, to abolish the race itself.”



“No,” he answered calmly. “In my ideal state, marriage should be tolerated; but it should be regulated by the government, with a total disregard of individual preferences, and with a sole view to the physical and intellectual improvement of the race. There should be a permanent government commission appointed, say one in each State consisting of the most prominent scientists and moral teachers. No marriage should be legal without being approved and confirmed by them. Marriage, as it is at present, is, in nine cases out of ten, an unqualified evil; as Schopenhauer puts it, it halves our joys and doubles our sorrows—”



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“And triples our expenses,” I prompted, laughing.

“And triples our expenses,” he repeated gravely. “Talk about finding your affinity and all that sort of stuff! Supposing the world to be a huge bag, as in reality it is; then take several hundred million blocks, representing human beings, and label each one by pairs, giving them a corresponding mark and color. Then shake the whole bag violently, and you will admit that the chances of an encounter between the two with the same label are extremely slim. It is just so with marriage. It is all chance—a heartless, aimless, and cruel lottery. There are more valuable human lives wrecked every hour of the day in this dangerous game than by all the vices that barbarism or civilization has ever invented.”

I hazarded some feeble remonstrance against these revolutionary heresies (as I conceived them to be), but my opponent met me on all sides with his inflexible logic. We spent several hours together without at all approaching an agreement, and finally parted with the promise to dine together and resume the discussion the next day.

This was the beginning of my acquaintance with the pessimist, Edmund Storm.

## II.

“Freundschaft, Liebe, Stein der Weisen,  
Diese Dreie hoert' ich preisen,  
Und ich pries und suchte sie,  
Aber ach! ich fand sie nie.”—HEINE.

During the next two years there was never a week, and seldom a day, when I did not see Storm. We lunched together at a much-frequented restaurant not far from Wall street, and my friend's sarcastic epigrams would do much to reconcile me to my temperance habits by supplying in a more ethereal form the stimulants with which others strove to facilitate or to ruin their digestions.

“Existence is even at best a doubtful boon,” he would say while he dissected his beefsteak with the seriousness of a scientific observer. “A man's philosophy is regulated by his stomach. No amount of stoicism can reconcile a man to dyspepsia. If our nationality were not by nature endowed with the digestion of a boa-constrictor, I should seriously consider the propriety of vanishing into the Nirvana.”

I often wondered what could be the secret of Storm's liking for me; for that he liked me, in his own lugubrious fashion, there could be no doubt. As for myself, I never could determine how far I reciprocated his feeling. I should hardly say that I loved him, but his talk fascinated me, and it always irritated me to hear any one speak ill of him. He was the very opposite of what the world calls “a good fellow;” he did not slap you on the



shoulder and salute you with a "Hallo, old boy!" and I am inclined to think that he would have promptly resented any undue familiarity. He was a man of the most exact habits, painfully conscientious in all his dealings, and absolutely devoid of vices, unless, indeed, his extravagance in the purchase of



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old furniture might be classed under that head. To people of slipshod habits, his painstaking exactness was of course highly exasperating, and I often myself felt that he was in need of a redeeming vice. If I could have induced him to smoke, take snuff, or indulge in a little innocent gambling, I believe it would have given me a good deal of satisfaction. Once, I remember, I exerted myself to the utmost to beguile him into taking a humorous view of a mendacious tramp, who, after having treated us to a highly pathetic autobiography, importuned us for a quarter. But no, Storm could see nothing but the moral hideousness of the man, lectured him severely, and would have sent him away unrewarded, if I had not temporarily suspended my principles.

During our continued intercourse, I naturally learned a good deal about my friend's previous life and occupation. He was of very good family, had enjoyed an excellent university education, and had the finest prospects of a prosperous career at home, when, as far as I could ascertain, he took a sudden freak to emigrate. He had inherited a modest fortune, and now maintained himself as cashier in a large tea importing house in the city. He read the newspapers diligently, apparently with a view to convincing himself of the universal wretchedness of mankind in general and the American people in particular, had a profound contempt for ambition of every sort, believed nothing that life could offer worthy of an effort, except—old furniture.

In the autumn of 187- he was taken violently ill with inflammation of the lungs, and I naturally devoted every evening to him that I could spare from my work. He suffered acutely, but was perfectly calm and hardly ever moved a muscle.

"I seldom indulge in the luxury of whining," he said to me once, as I was seated at his bedside. "But, if I should die, as I believe I shall, it would be a pity if the lesson of my life should be lost to humanity. It is the only valuable thing I leave behind me, except, perhaps, my furniture, which I bequeath to you."

He lay for a while looking with grave criticism at his long, lean fingers, and then told me the following story, of which I shall give a brief *resume*.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some ten years ago, while he was yet in the university, he had made the acquaintance of a young girl, Emily Gerstad, the daughter of a widow in whose house he lived. She was a wild unruly thing, full of coquettish airs, frivolous as a kitten, but for all that, a phenomenon of most absorbing interest. She was a blonde of the purest Northern type, with a magnificent wealth of thick curly hair and a pair of blue eyes, which seemed capable of expressing the very finest things that God ever deposited in a woman's nature. It was useless to disapprove of her, and to argue with her on the error of her ways was a waste of breath: her moral nature was too fatally flexible. She

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could assume with astonishing facility a hundred different attitudes on the same question, and acted the penitent, the indifferent, the defiant, with such a perfection of art as really to deceive herself. And in spite of all this, poor Storm soon found that she had wound herself so closely about his heart, that the process of unwinding, as he expressed it, would require greater strength and a sterner philosophy than he believed himself to possess. He had always been shy of women, not because he distrusted them, but because he was painfully conscious of being, in point of physical finish, a second-rate article, a bungling piece of work, and naturally felt his disadvantages more keenly in the presence of those upon whom Nature had expended all her best art. He was, according to his own assertion, an idealist by temperament, and had kept a sacred chamber in his heart where the vestal fire burned with a pure flame. Now the deepest strata of his being were stirred, and he loved with an overwhelming fervor and intensity which fairly frightened him. In a moment of abject despair he proposed to Emily, and to his surprise was accepted. And what was more, it was no comedy on her part; he even now believed that she really loved him. All the turbulent forces of her being were toned down to a beautiful, womanly tenderness. She clung to him with a passionate devotion which seemed to be no less of a surprise to herself than it was to him—clung to his stronger self, perhaps, as a refuge from her own waywardness, listened with a sweet, shame-faced happiness to his bright plans for their common future, and shared his pleasures and his light disappointments with an ardor and an ever ready sympathy, as if her whole previous life had been an education for this one end—to be a perfect wife and to be his wife.

But alas, their happiness was of brief duration. At the end of a year he had finished his legal studies, and passed a brilliant examination. An excellent situation was obtained for him in a small town on the sea-coast, whither he removed and began to prepare for the foundation of his home. It was here he contracted his taste for quaint furniture, all that was now left to him of his happiness—nay, of his life. Suddenly, at the end of eight months, she ceased writing to him—a fact which after all, argued well for her sincerity; full of apprehension, he hastened to the capital and found her engaged to a young lieutenant,—a dashing, hare-brained fellow, covered all over with gilt embroidery, undeniably handsome, but otherwise of very little worth. At least that was Storm's impression of him; he may have done him injustice, he added, with his usual conscientiousness. A man who sees the whole structure of his life tumbling down over his head is not apt to take a charitable view of the author of the ruin. A week later, Storm was on his way to America,—that was the end of the story.

Yes, if my friend had died, according to his promise, the story would have ended here; but, as for once, he broke his word, I am obliged to add the sequel. I noticed that for some time after his recovery he kept shy of me. As he afterward plainly told me, he felt as if I had purloined a piece of his most precious private property, in sharing a grief which had hitherto been his own exclusive treasure.



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### III.

Fuercht' dich nicht, du liebes Kindchen,  
Vor der boesen Geister Macht;  
Tag und Nacht, du liebes Kindchen,  
Halten Engel bei dir Wacht.—HEINE.

Once, on a warm moonlight night in September, Storm and I took a walk in the Park. The night always tuned him into a gentle mood, and I even suspect that he had some sentiment about it. The currents of life, he said, then ran more serenely, with a slower and healthier pulse-beat; the unfathomable mysteries of life crowded in upon us; our shallow individualities were quenched, and our larger human traits rose nearer to the surface. The best test of sympathy was a night walk; two persons who then jarred upon each other might safely conclude that they were constitutionally unsympathetic. He had known silly girls who in moonlight were sublime; but it was dangerous to build one's hopes of happiness upon this moonlight sublimity. Just as all complexions, except positive black, were fair when touched by the radiance of the night, so all shades of character, except downright wickedness, borrowed a finer human tinge under this illusory illumination. Thus ran his talk, I throwing in the necessary expletives, and as I am neither black nor absolutely wicked, I have reason to believe that I appeared to good advantage.

"It is very curious about women," he broke forth after a long meditative pause. "In spite of all my pondering on the subject, I never quite could understand the secret of their fascination. Their goodness, if they are good, is usually of the quality of oatmeal, and when they are bad—"

"They are horrid," I quoted promptly.

"Amen," he added with a contented chuckle. "I never could see the appropriateness of the Bible precept about coveting your neighbor's wife," he resumed after another brief silence. "I, for my part, never found my neighbor's wife worth coveting. But I will admit that I have, in a few instances, felt inclined to covet my neighbor's child. No amount of pessimism can quite fortify a man against the desire to have children. A child is not always a 'thing of beauty,' nor is it apt to be a 'joy for ever'; but I never yet met the man who would not be willing to take his chances. It is a confounded thing that the paternal instinct is so deeply implanted, even in such a piece of dried-up parchment as myself. It is like discovering a warm, live vein of throbbing blood under the shrivelled skin of an Egyptian mummy."

We sauntered on for more than an hour, now plunging into dense masses of shadow, now again emerging into cool pathways of light. The conversation turned on various topics, all of which Storm touched with a kindlier humor than was his wont. The world



was a failure, but for all that, it was the part of a wise man to make the best of it as it was. The clock in some neighboring tower struck ten; we took a street-car and rode home. As we were about to alight (I first, and Storm following closely after me), I noticed a woman with a wild, frightened face hurrying away from the street-lamp right in front of us. My friend, owing either to his near-sightedness, or his preoccupation, had evidently not observed her. We climbed the long dimly lighted stairs to his room, and both stumbled at the door against a large basket.



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“That detestable washwoman!” he muttered. “How often have I told her not to place her basket where everybody is sure to run into it!”

He opened the door and I carried the basket into the room, while he struck a match and lighted the drop-light on the table.

“Excuse me for a moment,” he went on, stooping to lift the cloth which covered the basket. “I want to count—Gracious heavens! what is this?” he cried suddenly, springing up as if he had stepped on something alive; then he sank down into an arm-chair, and sat staring vacantly before him. In the basket lay a sleeping infant, apparently about eight months old. As soon as I had recovered from my first astonishment, I bent down over it and regarded it attentively. It was a beautiful, healthy-looking child,—not a mere formless mass of fat with hastily sketched features, as babes of that age are apt to be. Its face was of exquisite finish, a straight, well-modelled little nose, a softly defined dimpled little chin, and a fresh, finely curved mouth, through which the even breath came and went with a quiet, hardly perceptible rhythm. It was all as sweet, harmonious, and artistically perfect as a Tennysonian stanza. The little waif won my heart at once, and it was a severe test of my self-denial that I had to repress my desire to kiss it. I somehow felt that my friend ought to be the first to recognize it as a member of his household.

“Storm,” I said, looking up at his pale, vacant face. “It is a dangerous thing to covet one’s neighbor’s child. But, if you don’t adopt this little dumb supplicant, I fear you will tempt me to break the tenth commandment. I believe there is a clause there about coveting children.”

Storm opened his eyes wide, and with an effort to rouse himself, pushed back the chair and knelt down at the side of the basket. With a gentle movement he drew off the cover under which the child slept, and discovered on its bosom a letter which he eagerly seized. As he glanced at the direction of the envelope, his face underwent a marvellous change; it was as if a mask had suddenly been removed, revealing a new type of warmer, purer, and tenderer manhood.

The letter read as follows:

“DEAREST EDMUND:

It has gone all wrong with me. You know I would not come to if there was any other hope left. As for myself, I do not care what becomes of me, but you will not forsake my little girl. Will you dear Edmund? I know you will not. I promise you, I shall never claim her back. She shall be yours always. Her name is Ragna; she was born February 25th, and was christened two months later. I have prayed to God that she may bring happiness into your life, that she may expiate the wrong her mother did you. I was not married until five years after you left me. It is a great sin to say it, but I always hoped

that you would come back to me I did not know then how great my wrong was. Now I know



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it and I have ceased to hope. Do not try to find me. It will be useless. I shall never willingly cross your path, dear Edmund. I have learned that happiness never comes where I am; and I would not darken your life again,—no I would not, so help me God! Only forgive me, if you can, and do not say anything bad about me to my child—ah! what a horrible thought! I did not mean to ask you that, because I know how good you are. I am so wild with strange thoughts, so dazed and bewildered that I do not know what I am saying. Farewell, dear Edmund.—Your, EMILY. If you should decide not to keep my little girl (as I do not think you will), send a line addressed E.H.H., to the personal column in the ‘N.Y. Herald.’ But do not try to find me. I shall answer you in the same way and tell you where to send the child. E.H.”

This letter was not shown to me until several years after, but even then the half illegible words, evidently traced with a trembling hand, the pathetic abruptness of the sentences, sounding like the grief-stricken cries of a living voice, and the still visible marks of tears upon the paper, made an impression upon me which is not easily forgotten.

In the meanwhile Storm, having read and reread the letter, was lifting his strangely illumined eyes to the ceiling.

“God be praised,” he said in a trembling whisper. “I have wronged her, too, and I did not know it. I will be a father to her child.”

The little girl, who had awaked, without signalling the fact in the usual manner, fixed her large, fawn-like eyes upon him in peaceful wonder. He knelt down once more, took her in his arms, and kissed her gravely and solemnly. It was charming to see with what tender awkwardness he held her, as if she were some precious thing made of frail stuff that might easily be broken. My curiosity had already prompted me to examine the basket, which contained a variety of clean, tiny articles,—linen, stockings, a rattle with the distinct impress of its nationality, and several neatly folded dresses, among which a long, white, elaborately embroidered one, marked by a slip of paper as “Baby’s Christening Robe.”

I will not reproduce the long and serious consultation which followed; be it sufficient to chronicle the result. I hastened homeward, and had my landlady, Mrs. Harrison, roused from her midnight slumbers; she was, as I knew, a woman of strong maternal instincts, who was fond of referring to her experience in that line,—a woman to whom your thought would naturally revert in embarrassing circumstances. She responded promptly and eagerly to my appeal; the situation evidently roused all the latent romance of her nature, and afforded her no small satisfaction. She spent a half hour in privacy with the baby, who re-appeared fresh and beaming in a sort of sacerdotal Norse night-habit which was a miracle of neatness.



“Bless her little heart,” ejaculated Mrs. Harrison, as the small fat hands persisted in pulling her already demoralized side curls. “She certainly knows me;” then in an aside to Storm: “The mother, whoever she may be, sir, is a lady. I never seed finer linen as long as I lived; and every single blessed piece is embroidered with two letters which I reckon means the name of the child.”



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Storm bowed his head silently and sighed. But when the baby, after having rather indifferently submitted to a caress from me, stretched out its arms to him and consented with great good humor to a final good-night kiss, large tears rolled down over his cheeks, while he smiled, as I thought only the angels could smile.

I am obliged to add before the curtain is dropped upon this nocturnal drama, that my friend was guilty of an astonishing piece of Vandalism. When my landlady had deposited the sleeping child in his large, exquisitely carved and canopied bed (which, as he declared, made him feel as if a hundred departed grandees were his bed-fellows), we both went in to have a final view of our little foundling. As we stood there, clasping each other's hands in silence, Storm suddenly fixed his eyes with a savage glare upon one of the bed-posts which contained a tile of porcelain, representing Joseph leaving his garment in the hand of Potiphar's wife; on the post opposite was seen Samson sheared of his glory and Delilah fleeing through the opened door with his seven locks in her hand; a third represented Jezebel being precipitated from a third-story window, and the subject of the fourth I have forgotten. It was a remnant of the not always delicate humor of the seventeenth century. My friend, with a fierce disgust, strangely out of keeping with his former mood, pulled a knife from his pocket, and deliberately proceeded to demolish the precious tiles. When he had succeeded in breaking out the last, he turned to me and said:

"I have been an atrocious fool. It is high time I should get to know it."

A week later I found four new tiles with designs of Fra Angelico's angels installed in the places of the reprobate Biblical women.

### IV.

"Wer zum ersten Male liebt,  
Sei es auch gluecklos ist ein Gott."—HEINE.

During the following week, Storm and I, with the aid of the police, searched New York from one end to the other; but Emily must have foreseen the event, and covered up her tracks carefully. Our seeking was all in vain. In the meanwhile the baby was not neglected; my friend's third room, which had hitherto done service as a sort of state parlor, was consecrated as a nursery, a stout German nurse was procured, and much time was devoted to the designing of a cradle (an odd mixture of the Pompeiian and the Eastlake style), which was well calculated to stimulate whatever artistic sense our baby may have been endowed with. If it had been heir to a throne, its wants could not have been more carefully studied. Storm was as flexible as wax in its tiny hand. Life had suddenly acquired a very definite meaning to him; he had discovered that he had a valuable stake in it. Strange as it may seem, the whole gigantic world, with its manifold

and complicated institutions, began to readjust itself in his mind with sole reference to its possible influence upon the baby's fate.



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Political questions were no longer convenient pegs to hang pessimistic epigrams on, but became matters of vital interest because they affected the moral condition of the country in which the baby was to grow up. Socialistic agitations, which a dispassionate bachelor could afford to regard with philosophic indifference, now presented themselves as diabolical plots to undermine the baby's happiness, and deprive her of whatever earthly goods Providence might see fit to bestow upon her, and so on, *ad infinitum*. From a radical, with revolutionary sympathies, my friend in the course of a year blossomed out into a conservative Philistine with a decided streak of optimism, and all for the sake of the baby. It was very amusing to listen to his solemn consultations with the nurse every morning before he betook himself to the office, and to watch the lively, almost child-like interest with which, on returning in the evening, he listened to her long-winded report of the baby's wonderful doings during the day. On Sundays, when he always spent the whole afternoon at home, I often surprised him in the most undignified attitudes, creeping about on the floor with the little girl riding on his back, or stretched out full length with his head in her lap, while she was gracious enough to interest herself in his hair, and even laughed and cooed with much inarticulate contentment. At such times, when, perhaps, through the disordered locks, I caught a glimpse of a beaming happy face (for my visits were never of sufficient account to interfere with baby's pleasures), I would pay my respectful tribute to the baby, acknowledging that she possessed a power, the secret of which I did not know.

But in spite of all this, I did not fail to detect that Storm's life was not even now without its sorrow. At our luncheons, I often saw a sad and thoughtful gloom settling upon his features; it was no longer the bitter reviling grief of former years, but a deep and mellow sadness, a regretful dwelling on mental images which were hard to contemplate and harder still to banish.

"Do you know," he exclaimed once, as he felt that I had divined his thoughts, "her face haunts me night and day! I feel as if my happiness in possessing the child were a daily robbery from her. I have continued my search for her up to this hour, but I have found no trace of her. Perhaps if you will help me, I shall not always be seeking in vain."

I gave him my hand silently across the table; he shook it heartily, and we parted.

It was about a month after this occurrence that I happened to be sitting on one of the benches near the entrance to Central Park. That restless spring feeling which always attacks me somewhat prematurely with the early May sunshine, had beguiled me into taking a holiday, and with a book, which had been sent me for review, lying open upon my knees, I was watching the occupants of the baby carriages which were being wheeled up and down on the pavement in front of me.



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Presently I discovered Storm's nurse seated on a bench near by in eager converse with a male personage of her own nationality. The baby, who was safely strapped in the carriage at the roadside, was pleasantly occupied in venting her destructive instincts upon a linen edition of "Mother Goose." As I arose to get a nearer view of the child, I saw a slender, simply dressed lady, with a beautiful but careworn face, evidently approaching with the same intention. At the sight of me she suddenly paused; a look of recognition seemed to be vaguely struggling in her features,—she turned around, and walked rapidly away. The thought immediately flashed through me that it was the same face I had seen under the gas-lamp on the evening when the child was found. Moreover, the type, although not glaringly Norse, corresponded in its general outline to Storm's description. Fearing to excite her suspicion, I forced my face into the most neutral expression, stooped down to converse with the baby, and then sauntered off with a leisurely air toward "Ward's Indian Hunter." I had no doubt that if the lady were the child's mother, she would soon reappear; and I need not add that my expectations proved correct. After having waited some fifteen minutes, I saw her returning with swift, wary steps and watchful eyes, like some lithe wild thing that scents danger in the air. As she came up to the nurse, she dropped down into the seat with a fine affectation of weariness, and began to chat with an attempt at indifference which was truly pathetic. Her eyes seemed all the while to be devouring the child with a wild, hungry tenderness. Suddenly she pounced upon it, hugged it tightly in her arms, and quite forgetting her *role*, strove no more to smother her sobs. The nurse was greatly alarmed; I heard her expostulating, but could not distinguish the words. The child cried. Suddenly the lady rose, explained briefly, as I afterward heard, that she had herself lately lost a child, and hurried away. At a safe distance I followed her, and succeeded in tracking her nearly a mile down Broadway, where she vanished into what appeared to be a genteel dressmaking establishment. By the aid of a friend of mine, a dealer in furnishing goods, whom I thought it prudent to take into my confidence, I ascertained that she called herself Mrs. Helm (an ineffectual disguise of the Norwegian Hjelm), that she was a widow of quiet demeanor and most exemplary habits, and that she had worked as a seamstress in the establishment during the past four months. My friend elicited these important facts under the pretence of wishing to employ her himself in the shirtmaking department of his own business.

Having through the same agency obtained the street and number of her boarding-place, I visited her landlady, who dispelled my last doubts, and moreover, informed me (perhaps under the impression that I was a possible suitor) that Mrs. Helm was as fine a lady as ever trod God's earth, and a fit wife for any man. The same evening I conveyed to Storm the result of my investigations.



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He sat listening to me with a grave intensity of expression, which at first I hardly knew how to interpret. Now and then I saw his lips quivering, and as I described the little scene with the child in the park, he rose abruptly and began to walk up and down on the floor. As I had finished, he again dropped down into the chair, raised his eyes devoutly to the ceiling, and murmured:

“Thank God!”

Thus he sat for a long while, sometimes moving his lips inaudibly, and seemingly unconscious of my presence. Then suddenly he sprang up and seized his hat and cane.

“It was number 532?” he said, laying hold of the door-knob.

“Yes,” I answered, “but you surely do not intend to see her to-night.”

“Yes, I do.”

“But it is after nine o’clock, and she may—”

But he was already half way down the stairs.

Through a dense, drizzling rain which made the gas-lights across the street look like moons set in misty aureoles, Storm hastened on until he reached the unaristocratic locality of Emily’s dwelling. He rang the door-bell, and after some slight expostulation with the servant was permitted to enter. Groping his way through a long, dimly-lit hall, he stumbled upon a staircase, which he mounted, and paused at the door which had been pointed out to him. A slender ray of light stole out through the key-hole, piercing the darkness without dispelling it. Storm hesitated long at the door before making up his mind to knock; a strange quivering agitation had come upon him, as if he were about to do something wrong. All sorts of wild imaginings rushed in upon him, and in his effort to rid himself of them he made an unconscious gesture, and seized hold of the door-knob. A hasty fluttering motion was heard from within, and presently the door was opened. A fair and slender lady with a sweet pale face stood before him; in one hand she held a needle, and in the other a bright-colored garment which resembled a baby’s jacket. He felt rather than saw that he was in Emily’s presence. His head and his heart seemed equally turbulent. A hundred memories from the buried past rose dimly into sight, and he could not chase them away. It was so difficult, too, to identify this grave and worn, though still young face, with that soft, dimpled, kitten-like Emily, who had conquered his youth and made his life hers. Ah! poor little dimpled Emily; yes, he feared she would never return to him. And he sighed at the thought that she had probably lost now all that charming naughtiness which he had once spent so much time in disapproving of. He was suddenly roused from these reflections by a vague, half-whispered cry; Emily had fled to the other end of the room, thrown herself on the bed,



and pressed her face hard down among the pillows. It was an act which immediately recalled the Emily of former days, a childish, and still natural motion like that of some shy and foolish animal which believes itself safe when its head is hidden. Storm closed the door, walked up to the bed, and seated himself on a hard, wooden chair.



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“Emily,” he said at last.

She raised herself abruptly on her arms, and gazed at him over her shoulder with large, tearless, frightened eyes.

“Edmund,” she whispered doubtfully. “Edmund.”

“Yes, Emily,” he answered in a soothing voice, as one speaks to a frightened child. “I have come to see you and to speak with you.”

“You have come to see me, Edmund,” she repeated mechanically. Then, as if the situation were gradually dawning upon her, “You have come to see *me*.”

His *role* had appeared so easy as he had hastily sketched it on the way,—gratitude on her part, forgiveness on his, and then a speedy reconciliation. But it was the exquisite delicacy of Storm’s nature which made him shrink from appearing in any way to condescend, to patronize, to forgive, where perhaps he needed rather to be forgiven. A strange awkwardness had come over him. He felt himself suddenly to be beyond his depth. How unpardonably blunt and masculinely obtuse he had been in dealing with this beautiful and tender thing, which God had once, for a short time, intrusted to his keeping! How cruel and wooden that moral code of his by which he had relentlessly judged her, and often found her wanting! What an effort it must have cost her finer-grained organism to assimilate his crude youthful maxims, what suffering to her tiny feet to be plodding wearily in his footsteps over the thorny moral wastes which he had laid behind him! All this came to him, as by revelation, as he sat gazing into Emily’s face, which looked very pathetic just then, with its vague bewilderment and its child-like surrender of any attempt to explain what there was puzzling in the situation. Storm was deeply touched. He would fain have spoken to her out of the fulness of his heart; but here again that awkward morality of his restrained him. There were, unfortunately, some disagreeable questions to be asked first.

Storm stared for a while with a pondering look at the floor; then he carefully knocked a speck of dust from the sleeve of his coat.

“Emily,” he said at last, solemnly. “Is your husband still alive?”

It was the bluntest way he could possibly have put it, and he bit his lip angrily at the thought of his awkwardness.

“My husband,” answered Emily, suddenly recovering her usual flute-like voice (and it vibrated through him like an electric shock)—“is he alive? No, he is dead—was killed in the Danish war.”

“And were you very happy with him, Emily? Was he very good to you?”



It was a brutish question to ask, and his ears burned uncomfortably; but there was no help for it.

“I was not happy,” answered she simply, and with an unthinking directness, as if the answer were nothing but his due; “because I was not good to him. I did not love him, and I never would have married him if mother had not died. But then, there was no one left who cared for me.”



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A blessed sense of rest stole over him; he lifted his grave eyes to hers, took her listless hand and held it close in his. She did not withdraw it, nor did she return his pressure.

“Emily, my darling,” he said, while his voice shook with repressed feeling (the old affectionate names rose as of themselves to his lips, and it seemed an inconceivable joy to speak them once more); “you must have suffered much.”

“I think I have deserved it, Edmund,” she answered with a little pout and a little quiver of her upper lip. “After all, the worst was that I had to lose my baby. But you are very good to her, Edmund, are you not?”

Her eyes now filled with tears, and they began to fall slowly, one by one, down over her cheeks.

“Yes, darling,” he broke forth,—the impulse of tenderness now overmastering all other thoughts. “And I will be good to you also, Emily, if you will only let me.”

He had risen and drawn her lithe, unresisting form to his bosom. She wept silently, a little convulsive sob now and then breaking the stillness.

“You will not leave me again, Edmund, will you?” she queried, with a sweet, distressed look, as if the very thought of being once more alone made her shudder.

“No, Emily dear, I will never leave you.”

“Can you believe me, Edmund?” she began suddenly, after a long pause. “I have always been true to you.”

He clasped her face between his palms, drew it back to gaze at it, and then kissed her tenderly.

“God bless you, darling!” he whispered, folding her closely in his arms, as if he feared that some one might take her away from him.

How he would love and keep and protect her—this poor bruised little creature, whom he had once so selfishly abandoned at the very first suspicion of disloyalty! As she stood there, nestling so confidingly against his bosom, his heart went out to her with a great yearning pity, and he thanked God even for the long suffering and separation which had made their love the more abiding and sacred.

The next day Storm and Emily were quietly married, and the baby and I were present as witnesses. They now live in a charming little cottage on the Jersey side, which is to me a wonder of taste and comfort. Out of my friend’s miscellaneous assortment of ancient furniture his wife has succeeded in creating a series of the quaintest, most fascinating boudoirs and parlors and bedrooms—everything, as Storm assures me, historically

correct and in perfect style and keeping; so that, in walking through the house, you get a whiff of at least three distinct centuries. To quote Storm once more, he sleeps in the sober religious atmosphere of the German Reformation, with its rational wood-tints and solid oaken carvings, dines amid the pagan splendors of the Italian Renaissance, and receives company among the florid conventionalities of the French rococo period.