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International Short Stories: French

A PIECE OF BREAD BY FRANCOIS COPPEE

The young Due de Hardimont happened to be at Aix in Savoy, whose waters he hoped would benefit his famous mare, Perichole, who had become wind-broken since the cold she had caught at the last Derby, – and was finishing his breakfast while glancing over the morning paper, when he read the news of the disastrous engagement at Reichshoffen.

He emptied his glass of chartreuse, laid his napkin upon the restaurant table, ordered his valet to pack his trunks, and two hours later took the express to Paris; arriving there, he hastened to the recruiting office and enlisted in a regiment of the line.

In vain had he led the enervating life of a fashionable swell – that was the word of the time – and had knocked about race-course stables from the age of nineteen to twenty-five. In circumstances like these, he could not forget that Enguerrand de Hardimont died of the plague at Tunis the same day as Saint Louis, that Jean de Hardimont commanded the Free Companies under Du Guesclin, and that Francois-Henri de Hardimont was killed at Fontenoy with "Red" Maison. Upon learning that France had lost a battle on French soil, the young duke felt the blood mount to his face, giving him a horrible feeling of suffocation.

And so, early in November, 1870, Henri de Hardimont returned to Paris with his regiment, forming part of Vinoy's corps, and his company being the advance guard before the redoubt of Hautes Bruyères, a position fortified in haste, and which protected the cannon of Fort Bicêtre.

It was a gloomy place; a road planted with clusters of broom, and broken up into muddy ruts, traversing the leprous fields of the neighborhood; on the border stood an abandoned tavern, a tavern with arbors, where the soldiers had established their post. They had fallen back here a few days before; the grape-shot had broken down some of the young trees, and all of them bore upon their bark the white scars of bullet wounds. As for the house, its appearance made one shudder; the roof had been torn by a shell, and the walls seemed whitewashed with blood. The torn and shattered arbors under their network of twigs, the rolling of an upset cask, the high swing whose wet rope groaned in the damp wind, and the inscriptions over the door, furrowed by bullets; "Cabinets de societé – Absinthe – Vermouth – Vin à 60 cent. le litre" – encircling a dead rabbit painted over two billiard cues tied in a cross by a ribbon, – all this recalled with cruel irony the popular entertainment of former days. And over all, a wretched winter sky, across which rolled heavy leaden clouds, an odious sky, angry and hateful.

At the door of the tavern stood the young duke, motionless, with his gun in his shoulder-belt, his cap over his eyes, his benumbed hands in the pockets of his red trousers, and shivering in his sheepskin coat. He gave himself up to his sombre thoughts, this defeated soldier, and looked with sorrowful eyes toward a line of hills, lost in the fog, where could be seen each moment, the flash and smoke of a Krupp gun, followed by a report.

Suddenly he felt hungry.

Stooping, he drew from his knapsack, which stood near him leaning against the wall, a piece of ammunition bread, and as he had lost his knife, he bit off a morsel and slowly ate it.

But after a few mouthfuls, he had enough of it; the bread was hard and had a bitter taste. No fresh would be given until the next morning's distribution, so the commissary officer had willed it. This was certainly a very hard life sometimes. The remembrance of former breakfasts came to him,

such as he had called "hygienic," when, the day after too over-heating a supper, he would seat himself by a window on the ground floor of the Café-Anglais, and be served with a cutlet, or buttered eggs with asparagus tips, and the butler, knowing his tastes, would bring him a fine bottle of old Léoville, lying in its basket, and which he would pour out with the greatest care. The deuce take it! That was a good time, all the same, and he would never become accustomed to this life of wretchedness.

And, in a moment of impatience, the young man threw the rest of his bread into the mud.

At the same moment a soldier of the line came from the tavern, stooped and picked up the bread, drew back a few steps, wiped it with his sleeve and began to devour it eagerly.

Henri de Hardimont was already ashamed of his action, and now with a feeling of pity, watched the poor devil who gave proof of such a good appetite. He was a tall, large young fellow, but badly made; with feverish eyes and a hospital beard, and so thin that his shoulder-blades stood out beneath his well-worn cape.

"You are very hungry?" he said, approaching the soldier.

"As you see," replied the other with his mouth full.

"Excuse me then. For if I had known that you would like the bread, I would not have thrown it away."

"It does not harm it," replied the soldier, "I am not dainty."

"No matter," said the gentleman, "it was wrong to do so, and I reproach myself. But I do not wish you to have a bad opinion of me, and as I have some old cognac in my can, let us drink a drop together."

The man had finished eating. The duke and he drank a mouthful of brandy; the acquaintance was made.

"What is your name?" asked the soldier of the line.

"Hardimont," replied the duke, omitting his title. "And yours?"

"Jean-Victor – I have just entered this company – I am just out of the ambulance – I was wounded at Châtillon – oh! but it was good in the ambulance, and in the infirmary they gave me horse bouillon. But I had only a scratch, and the major signed my dismissal. So much the worse for me! Now I am going to commence to be devoured by hunger again – for, believe me, if you will, comrade, but, such as you see me, I have been hungry all my life."

The words were startling, especially to a Sybarite who had just been longing for the kitchen of the Café-Anglais, and the Duc de Hardimont looked at his companion in almost terrified amazement. The soldier smiled sadly, showing his hungry, wolf-like teeth, as white as his sickly face, and, as if understanding that the other expected something further in the way of explanation or confidence:

"Come," said he, suddenly ceasing his familiar way of speaking, doubtless divining that his companion belonged to the rich and happy; "let us walk along the road to warm our feet, and I will tell you things, which probably you have never heard of – I am called Jean-Victor, that is all, for I am a foundling, and my only happy remembrance is of my earliest childhood, at the Asylum. The sheets were white on our little beds in the dormitory; we played in a garden under large trees, and a kind Sister took care of us, quite young and as pale as a wax-taper – she died afterwards of lung trouble – I was her favorite, and would rather walk by her than play with the other children, because she used to draw me to her side and lay her warm thin hand on my forehead. But when I was twelve years old, after my first communion, there was nothing but poverty. The managers put me as apprentice with a chair mender in Faubourg Saint-Jacques. That is not a trade, you know, it is impossible to earn one's living at it, and as proof of it, the greater part of the time the master was only able to engage the poor little blind boys from the Blind Asylum. It was there that I began to suffer with hunger. The master and mistress, two old Limousins – afterwards murdered, were terrible misers, and the bread, cut in tiny pieces for each meal, was kept under lock and key the rest of the time. You should have seen the mistress at supper time serving the soup, sighing at each ladleful she dished out. The other apprentices, two blind boys, were less unhappy; they were not given more than I, but they could not

see the reproachful look the wicked woman used to give me as she handed me my plate. And then, unfortunately, I was always so terribly hungry. Was it my fault, do you think? I served there for three years, in a continual fit of hunger. Three years! And one can learn the work in one month. But the managers could not know everything, and had no suspicion that the children were abused. Ah! you were astonished just now when you saw me take the bread out of the mud? I am used to that for I have picked up enough of it; and crusts from the dust, and when they were too hard and dry, I would soak them all night in my basin. I had windfalls sometimes, such as pieces of bread nibbled at the ends, which the children would take out of their baskets and throw on the sidewalks as they came from school. I used to try to prowl around there when I went on errands. At last my time was ended at this trade by which no man can support himself. Well, I did many other things, for I was willing enough to work. I served the masons; I have been shop-boy, floor-polisher, I don't know what all! But, pshaw; to-day, work is lacking, another time I lose my place: Briefly, I never have had enough to eat. Heavens! how often have I been crazy with hunger as I have passed the bakeries! Fortunately for me; at these times I have always remembered the good Sister at the Asylum, who so often told me to be honest, and I seemed to feel her warm little hand upon my forehead. At last, when I was eighteen I enlisted; you know as well as I do, that the trooper has only just enough. Now, – I could almost laugh – here is the siege and famine! You see, I did not lie, when I told you, just now that I have always, always, been hungry!"

The young duke had a kind heart and was profoundly moved by this terrible story, told him by a man like himself, by a soldier whose uniform made him his equal. It was even fortunate for the phlegm of this dandy, that the night wind dried the tears which dimmed his eyes.

"Jean-Victor," said he, ceasing in his turn, by a delicate tact, to speak familiarly to the foundling, "if we survive this dreadful war, we will meet again, and I hope that I may be useful to you. But, in the meantime, as there is no bakery but the commissary, and as my ration of bread is twice too large for my delicate appetite, – it is understood, is it not? – we will share it like good comrades."

It was strong and hearty, the hand-clasp which followed: then, harassed and worn by their frequent watches and alarms, as night fell, they returned to the tavern, where twelve soldiers were sleeping on the straw; and throwing themselves down side by side, they were soon sleeping soundly.

Toward midnight Jean-Victor awoke, being hungry probably. The wind had scattered the clouds, and a ray of moonlight made its way into the room through a hole in the roof, lighting up the handsome blonde head of the young duke, who was sleeping like an Endymion.

Still touched by the kindness of his comrade, Jean-Victor was gazing at him with admiration, when the sergeant of the platoon opened the door and called the five men who were to relieve the sentinels of the out-posts. The duke was of the number, but he did not waken when his name was called.

"Hardimont, stand up!" repeated the non-commissioned officer.

"If you are willing, sergeant," said Jean-Victor rising, "I will take his duty, he is sleeping so soundly – and he is my comrade."

"As you please."

The five men left, and the snoring recommenced.

But half an hour later the noise of near and rapid firing burst upon the night. In an instant every man was on his feet, and each with his hand on the chamber of his gun, stepped cautiously out, looking earnestly along the road, lying white in the moonlight.

"What time is it?" asked the duke. "I was to go on duty to-night."

"Jean-Victor went in your place."

At that moment a soldier was seen running toward them along the road.

"What is it?" they cried as he stopped, out of breath.

"The Prussians have attacked us, let us fall back to the redoubt."

"And your comrades?"

"They are coming – all but poor Jean-Victor."
"Where is he?" cried the duke.
"Shot through the head with a bullet – died without a word! – ough!"

* * * * *

One night last winter, the Due de Hardimont left his club about two o'clock in the morning, with his neighbor, Count de Saulnes; the duke had lost some hundred louis, and had a slight headache.

"If you are willing, André," he said to his companion, "we will go home on foot – I need the air."

"Just as you please, I am willing, although the walking may he bad."

They dismissed their coupés, turned up the collars of their overcoats, and set off toward the Madeleine. Suddenly an object rolled before the duke which he had struck with the toe of his boot; it was a large piece of bread spattered with mud.

Then to his amazement, Monsieur de Saulnes saw the Due de Hardimont pick up the piece of bread, wipe it carefully with his handkerchief embroidered with his armorial bearings, and place it on a bench, in full view under the gaslight.

"What did you do that for?" asked the count, laughing heartily, "are you crazy?"

"It is in memory of a poor fellow who died for me," replied the duke in a voice which trembled slightly, "do not laugh, my friend, it offends me."

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE
BY HONORE DE BALZAC

In a sumptuous palace of Ferrara, one winter evening, Don Juan Belvidéro was entertaining a prince of the house of Este. In those days a banquet was a marvelous affair, which demanded princely riches or the power of a nobleman. Seven pleasure-loving women chatted gaily around a table lighted by perfumed candles, surrounded by admirable works of art whose white marble stood out against the walls of red stucco and contrasted with the rich Turkey carpets. Clad in satin, glittering with gold and laden with gems which sparkled only less brilliantly than their eyes, they all told of passions, intense, but of various styles, like their beauty. They differed neither in their words nor their ideas; but an expression, a look, a motion or an emphasis served as a commentary, unrestrained, licentious, melancholy or bantering, to their words.

One seemed to say: "My beauty has power to rekindle the frozen heart of age." Another: "I love to repose on soft cushions and think with rapture of my adorers." A third, a novice at these fêtes, was inclined to blush. "At the bottom of my heart I feel compunction," she seemed to say. "I am a Catholic and I fear hell; but I love you so – ah, so dearly – that I would sacrifice eternity to you!" The fourth, emptying a cup of Chian wine, cried: "Hurrah, for pleasure! I begin a new existence with each dawn. Forgetful of the past, still intoxicated with the violence of yesterday's pleasures, I embrace a new life of happiness, a life filled with love."

The woman sitting next to Belvidéro looked at him with flashing eyes. She was silent. "I should have no need to call on a bravo to kill my lover if he abandoned me." Then she had laughed; but a comfit dish of marvelous workmanship was shattered between her nervous fingers.

"When are you to be grand duke?" asked the sixth of the prince, with an expression of murderous glee on her lips and a look of Bacchanalian frenzy in her eyes.

"And when is your father going to die?" said the seventh, laughing and throwing her bouquet to Don Juan with maddening coquetry. She was an innocent young girl who was accustomed to play with sacred things.

"Oh, don't speak of it!" cried the young and handsome Don Juan. "There is only one immortal father in the world, and unfortunately he is mine!"

The seven women of Ferrara, the friends of Don Juan, and the prince himself gave an exclamation of horror. Two hundred years later, under Louis XV, well-bred persons would have laughed at this sally. But perhaps at the beginning of an orgy the mind had still an unusual degree of lucidity. Despite the heat of the candles, the intensity of the emotions, the gold and silver vases, the fumes of wine, despite the vision of ravishing women, perhaps there still lurked in the depths of the heart a little of that respect for things human and divine which struggles until the revel has drowned it in floods of sparkling wine. Nevertheless, the flowers were already crushed, the eyes were steeped with drink, and intoxication, to quote Rabelais, had reached even to the sandals. In the pause that followed a door opened, and, as at the feast of Balthazar, God manifested himself. He seemed to command recognition now in the person of an old, white-haired servant with unsteady gait and drawn brows; he entered with gloomy mien and his look seemed to blight the garlands, the ruby cups, the pyramids of fruits, the brightness of the feast, the glow of the astonished faces and the colors of the cushions dented by the white arms of the women; then he cast a pall over this folly by saying, in a hollow voice, the solemn words: "Sir, your father is dying!"

Don Juan rose, making a gesture to his guests, which might be translated:

"Excuse me, this does not happen every day."

Does not the death of a parent often overtake young people thus in the fulness of life, in the wild enjoyment of an orgy? Death is as unexpected in her caprices as a woman in her fancies, but more faithful – Death has never duped any one.

When Don Juan had closed the door of the banquet hall and walked down the long corridor, which was both cold and dark, he compelled himself to assume a mask, for, in thinking of his rôle of son, he had cast off his merriment as he threw down his napkin. The night was black. The silent servant who conducted the young man to the death chamber, lighted the way so insufficiently that Death, aided by the cold, the silence, the gloom, perhaps by a reaction of intoxication, was able to force some reflections into the soul of the spendthrift; he examined his life, and became thoughtful, like a man involved in a lawsuit when he sets out for the court of justice.

Bartholomeo Belvidéro, the father of Don Juan, was an old man of ninety, who had devoted the greater part of his life to business. Having traveled much in Oriental countries he had acquired there great wealth and learning more precious, he said, than gold or diamonds, to which he no longer gave more than a passing thought. "I value a tooth more than a ruby," he used to say, smiling, "and power more than knowledge." This good father loved to hear Don Juan relate his youthful adventures, and would say, banteringly, as he lavished money upon him: "Only amuse yourself, my dear child!" Never did an old man find such pleasure in watching a young man. Paternal love robbed age of its terrors in the delight of contemplating so brilliant a life.

At the age of sixty, Belvidéro had become enamored of an angel of peace and beauty. Don Juan was the sole fruit of this late love. For fifteen years the good man had mourned the loss of his dear Juana. His many servants and his son attributed the strange habits he had contracted to this grief. Bartholomeo lodged himself in the most uncomfortable wing of his palace and rarely went out, and even Don Juan could not intrude into his father's apartment without first obtaining permission. If this voluntary recluse came or went in the palace or in the streets of Ferrara he seemed to be searching for something which he could not find. He walked dreamily, undecidedly, preoccupied like a man battling with an idea or with a memory. While the young man gave magnificent entertainments and the palace re-echoed his mirth, while the horses pawed the ground in the courtyard and the pages quarreled at their game of dice on the stairs, Bartholomeo ate seven ounces of bread a day and drank water. If he asked for a little poultry it was merely that he might give the bones to a black spaniel, his faithful companion. He never complained of the noise. During his illness if the blast of horns or the barking of dogs interrupted his sleep, he only said: "Ah, Don Juan has come home." Never before was so untroublesome and indulgent a father to be found on this earth; consequently young Belvidéro, accustomed to treat him without ceremony, had all the faults of a spoiled child. His attitude toward Bartholomeo was like that of a capricious woman toward an elderly lover, passing off an impertinence with a smile, selling his good humor and submitting to be loved. In calling up the picture of his youth, Don Juan recognized that it would be difficult to find an instance in which his father's goodness had failed him. He felt a newborn remorse while he traversed the corridor, and he very nearly forgave his father for having lived so long. He reverted to feelings of filial piety, as a thief returns to honesty in the prospect of enjoying a well-stolen million.

Soon the young man passed into the high, chill rooms of his father's apartment. After feeling a moist atmosphere and breathing the heavy air and the musty odor which is given forth by old tapestries and furniture covered with dust, he found himself in the antique room of the old man, in front of a sick bed and near a dying fire. A lamp standing on a table of Gothic shape shed its streams of uneven light sometimes more, sometimes less strongly upon the bed and showed the form of the old man in ever-varying aspects. The cold air whistled through the insecure windows, and the snow beat with a dull sound against the panes.

This scene formed so striking a contrast to the one which Don Juan had just left that he could not help shuddering. He felt cold when, on approaching the bed, a sudden flare of light, caused by a gust of wind, illumined his father's face. The features were distorted; the skin, clinging tightly to the

bones, had a greenish tint, which was made the more horrible by the whiteness of the pillows on which the old man rested; drawn with pain, the mouth, gaping and toothless, gave breath to sighs which the howling of the tempest took Tip and drew out into a dismal wail. In spite of these signs of dissolution an incredible expression of power shone in the face. The eyes, hallowed by disease, retained a singular steadiness. A superior spirit was fighting there with death. It seemed as if Bartholomeo sought to kill with his dying look some enemy seated at the foot of his bed. This gaze, fixed and cold, was made the more appalling by the immobility of the head, which was like a skull standing on a doctor's table. The body, clearly outlined by the coverlet, showed that the dying man's limbs preserved the same rigidity. All was dead, except the eyes. There was something mechanical in the sounds which came from the mouth. Don Juan felt a certain shame at having come to the deathbed of his father with a courtesan's bouquet on his breast, bringing with him the odors of a banquet and the fumes of wine.

"You were enjoying yourself!" cried the old man, on seeing his son.

At the same moment the pure, high voice of a singer who entertained the guests, strengthened by the chords of the viol by which she was accompanied, rose above the roar of the storm and penetrated the chamber of death. Don Juan would gladly have shut out this barbarous confirmation of his father's words.

Bartholomeo said: "I do not grudge you your pleasure, my child."

These words, full of tenderness, pained Don Juan, who could not forgive his father for such goodness.

"What, sorrow for me, father!" he cried.

"Poor Juanino," answered the dying man, "I have always been so gentle toward you that you could not wish for my death?"

"Oh!" cried Don Juan, "if it were possible to preserve your life by giving you a part of mine!" ("One can always say such things," thought the spendthrift; "it is as if I offered the world to my mistress.")

The thought had scarcely passed through his mind when the old spaniel whined. This intelligent voice made Don Juan tremble. He believed that the dog understood him.

"I knew that I could count on you, my son," said the dying man. "There, you shall be satisfied. I shall live, but without depriving you of a single day of your life."

"He raves," said Don Juan to himself.

Then he said, aloud: "Yes, my dearest father, you will indeed live as long as I do, for your image will be always in my heart."

"It is not a question of that sort of life," said the old nobleman, gathering all his strength to raise himself to a sitting posture, for he was stirred by one of those suspicions which are only born at the bedside of the dying. "Listen, my son," he continued in a voice weakened by this last effort. "I have no more desire to die than you have to give up your lady loves, wine, horses, falcons, hounds and money – "

"I can well believe it," thought his son, kneeling beside the pillow and kissing one of Bartholomeo's cadaverous hands. "But, father," he said aloud, "my dear father, we must submit to the will of God!"

"God! I am also God!" growled the old man.

"Do not blaspheme!" cried the young man, seeing the menacing expression which was overspreading his father's features. "Be careful what you say, for you have received extreme unction and I should never be consoled if you were to die in a state of sin."

"Are you going to listen to me?" cried the dying man, gnashing his toothless jaws.

Don Juan held his peace. A horrible silence reigned. Through the dull wail of the snowstorm came again the melody of the viol and the heavenly voice, faint as the dawning day.

The dying man smiled.

"I thank you for having brought singers and music! A banquet, young and beautiful women, with dark locks, all the pleasures of life. Let them remain. I am about to be born again."

"The delirium is at its height," said Don Juan to himself.

"I have discovered a means of resuscitation. There, look in the drawer of the table – you open it by pressing a hidden spring near the griffin."

"I have it, father."

"Good! Now take out a little flask of rock crystal."

"Here it is."

"I have spent twenty years in – "

At this point the old man felt his end approaching, and collected all his energy to say:

"As soon as I have drawn my last breath rub me with this water and I shall come to life again."

"There is very little of it," replied the young man.

Bartholomeo was no longer able to speak, but he could still hear and see. At these words he turned his head toward Don Juan with a violent wrench. His neck remained twisted like that of a marble statue doomed by the sculptor's whim to look forever sideways, his staring eyes assumed a hideous fixity. He was dead, dead in the act of losing his only, his last illusion. In seeking a shelter in his son's heart he had found a tomb more hollow than those which men dig for their dead. His hair, too, had risen with horror and his tense gaze seemed still to speak. It was a father rising in wrath from his sepulchre to demand vengeance of God.

"There, the good man is done for!" exclaimed Don Juan.

Intent upon taking the magic crystal to the light of the lamp, as a drinker examines his bottle at the end of a repast, he had not seen his father's eye pale. The cowering dog looked alternately at his dead master and at the elixir, as Don Juan regarded by turns his father and the phial. The lamp threw out fitful waves of light. The silence was profound, the viol was mute. Belvidéro thought he saw his father move, and he trembled. Frightened by the tense expression of the accusing eyes, he closed them, just as he would have pushed down a window-blind on an autumn night. He stood motionless, lost in a world of thought.

Suddenly a sharp creak, like that of a rusty spring, broke the silence. Don Juan, in his surprise, almost dropped the flask. A perspiration, colder than the steel of a dagger, oozed out from his pores. A cock of painted wood came forth from a clock and crowed three times. It was one of those ingenious inventions by which the savants of that time were awakened at the hour fixed for their work. Already the daybreak reddened the casement. The old timepiece was more faithful in its master's service than Don Juan had been in his duty to Bartholomeo. This instrument was composed of wood, pulleys, cords and wheels, while he had that mechanism peculiar to man, called a heart.

In order to run no further risk of losing the mysterious liquid the skeptical Don Juan replaced it in the drawer of the little Gothic table. At this solemn moment he heard a tumult in the corridor. There were confused voices, stifled laughter, light footsteps, the rustle of silk, in short, the noise of a merry troop trying to collect itself in some sort of order. The door opened and the prince, the seven women, the friends of Don Juan and the singers, appeared, in the fantastic disorder of dancers overtaken by the morning, when the sun disputes the paling light of the candles. They came to offer the young heir the conventional condolences.

"Oh, oh, is poor Don Juan really taking this death seriously?" said the prince in la Brambilla's ear.

"Well, his father was a very good man," she replied.

Nevertheless, Don Juan's nocturnal meditations had printed so striking an expression upon his face that it commanded silence. The men stopped, motionless. The women, whose lips had been parched with wine, threw themselves on their knees and began to pray. Don Juan could not help shuddering as he saw this splendor, this joy, laughter, song, beauty, life personified, doing homage thus to Death. But in this adorable Italy religion and revelry were on such good terms that religion

was a sort of debauch and debauch religion. The prince pressed Don Juan's hand affectionately, then all the figures having given expression to the same look, half-sympathy, half-indifference, the phantasmagoria disappeared, leaving the chamber empty. It was, indeed, a faithful image of life! Going down the stairs the prince said to la Rivabarella:

"Heigho! who would have thought Don Juan a mere boaster of impiety? He loved his father, after all!"

"Did you notice the black dog?" asked la Brambilla.

"He is immensely rich now," sighed Bianca Cavatolini.

"What is that to me?" cried the proud Veronese, she who had broken the comfit dish.

"What is that to you?" exclaimed the duke. "With his ducats he is as much a prince as I am!"

At first Don Juan, swayed by a thousand thoughts, wavered toward many different resolutions. After having ascertained the amount of the wealth amassed by his father, he returned in the evening to the death chamber, his soul puffed up with a horrible egoism. In the apartment he found all the servants of the household busied in collecting the ornaments for the bed of state on which "feu monseigneur" would lie to-morrow – a curious spectacle which all Ferrara would come to admire. Don Juan made a sign and the servants stopped at once, speechless and trembling.

"Leave me alone," he said in an altered voice, "and do not return until I go out again."

When the steps of the old servant, who was the last to leave, had died away on the stone flooring, Don Juan locked the door hastily, and, sure that he was alone, exclaimed:

"Now, let us try!"

The body of Bartholomeo lay on a long table. To hide the revolting spectacle of a corpse whose extreme decrepitude and thinness made it look like a skeleton, the embalmers had drawn a sheet over the body, which covered all but the head. This mummy-like figure was laid out in the middle of the room, and the linen, naturally clinging, outlined the form vaguely, but showing its stiff, bony thinness. The face already had large purple spots, which showed the urgency of completing the embalming. Despite the skepticism with which Don Juan was armed, he trembled as he uncorked the magic phial of crystal. When he stood close to the head he shook so that he was obliged to pause for a moment. But this young man had allowed himself to be corrupted by the customs of a dissolute court. An idea worthy of the Duke of Urbino came to him, and gave him a courage which was spurred on by lively curiosity. It seemed as if the demon had whispered the words which resounded in his heart: "Bathe an eye!" He took a piece of linen and, after having moistened it sparingly with the precious liquid, he passed it gently over the right eyelid of the corpse. The eye opened!

"Ah!" said Don Juan, gripping the flask in his hand as we clutch in our dreams the branch by which we are suspended over a precipice.

He saw an eye full of life, a child's eye in a death's head, the liquid eye of youth, in which the light trembled. Protected by beautiful black lashes, it scintillated like one of those solitary lights which travelers see in lonely places on winter evenings. It seemed as if the glowing eye would pierce Don Juan. It thought, accused, condemned, threatened, judged, spoke – it cried, it snapped at him! There was the most tender supplication, a royal anger, then the love of a young girl imploring mercy of her executioners. Finally, the awful look that a man casts upon his fellow-men on his way to the scaffold. So much life shone in this fragment of life that Don Juan recoiled in terror. He walked up and down the room, not daring to look at the eye, which stared back at him from the ceiling and from the hangings. The room was sown with points full of fire, of life, of intelligence. Everywhere gleamed eyes which shrieked at him.

"He might have lived a hundred years longer!" he cried involuntarily when, led in front of his father by some diabolical influence, he contemplated the luminous spark.

Suddenly the intelligent eye closed, and then opened again abruptly, as if assenting. If a voice had cried, "Yes," Don Juan could not have been more startled.

"What is to be done?" he thought

He had the courage to try to close this white eyelid, but his efforts were in vain.

"Shall I crush it out? Perhaps that would be parricide?" he asked himself.

"Yes," said the eye, by means of an ironical wink.

"Ah!" cried Don Juan, "there is sorcery in it!"

He approached the eye to crush it. A large tear rolled down the hollow cheek of the corpse and fell on Belvidéro's hand.

"It is scalding!" he cried, sitting down.

This struggle had exhausted him, as if, like Jacob, he had battled with an angel.

At last he arose, saying: "So long as there is no blood – "

Then, collecting all the courage needed for the cowardly act, he crushed out the eye, pressing it in with the linen without looking at it. A deep moan, startling and terrible, was heard. It was the poor spaniel, who died with a howl.

"Could he have been in the secret?" Don Juan wondered, surveying the faithful animal.

Don Juan was considered a dutiful son. He raised a monument of white marble over his father's tomb, and employed the most prominent artists of the time to carve the figures. He was not altogether at ease until the statue of his father, kneeling before Religion, imposed its enormous weight on the grave, in which he had buried the only regret that had ever touched his heart, and that only in moments of physical depression.

On making an inventory of the immense wealth amassed by the old Orientalist, Don Juan became avaricious. Had he not two human lives in which he should need money? His deep, searching gaze penetrated the principles of social life, and he understood the world all the better because he viewed it across a tomb. He analyzed men and things that he might have done at once with the past, represented by history, with the present, expressed by the law, and with the future revealed by religion. He took soul and matter, threw them into a crucible, and found nothing there, and from that time forth he became Don Juan.

Master of the illusions of life he threw himself – young and beautiful – into life; despising the world, but seizing the world. His happiness could never be of that bourgeois type which is satisfied by boiled beef, by a welcome warming-pan in winter, a lamp at night and new slippers at each quarter. He grasped existence as a monkey seizes a nut, peeling off the coarse shell to enjoy the savory kernel. The poetry and sublime transports of human passion touched no higher than his instep. He never made the mistake of those strong men who, imagining that little Souls believe in the great, venture to exchange noble thoughts of the future for the small coin of our ideas of life. He might, like them, have walked with his feet on earth and his head among the clouds, but he preferred to sit at his ease and sear with his kisses the lips of more than one tender, fresh and sweet woman. Like Death, wherever he passed, he devoured all without scruple, demanding a passionate, Oriental love and easily won pleasure. Loving only woman in women, his soul found its natural trend in irony.

When his inamoratas mounted to the skies in an ecstasy of bliss, Don Juan followed, serious, unreserved, sincere as a German student. But he said "I" while his lady love, in her folly, said "we." He knew admirably how to yield himself to a woman's influence. He was always clever enough to make her believe that he trembled like a college youth who asks his first partner at a ball: "Do you like dancing?" But he could also be terrible when necessary; he could draw his sword and destroy skilled soldiers. There was banter in his simplicity and laughter in his tears, for he could weep as well as any woman who says to her husband: "Give me a carriage or I shall pine to death."

For merchants the world means a bale of goods or a quantity of circulating notes; for most young men it is a woman; for some women it is a man; for certain natures it is society, a set of people, a position, a city; for Don Juan the universe was himself! Noble, fascinating and a model of grace, he fastened his bark to every bank; but he allowed himself to be carried only where he wished to go. The more he saw the more skeptical he became. Probing human nature he soon guessed that courage was rashness; prudence, cowardice; generosity, shrewd calculation; justice, a crime; delicacy,

pusillanimity; honesty, policy; and by a singular fatality he perceived that the persons who were really honest, delicate, just, generous, prudent and courageous received no consideration at the hands of their fellows.

"What a cheerless jest!" he cried. "It does not come from a god!"

And then, renouncing a better world, he showed no mark of respect to holy things and regarded the marble saints in the churches merely as works of art. He understood the mechanism of human society, and never offended too much against the current prejudices, for the executioners had more power than he; but he bent the social laws to his will with the grace and wit that are so well displayed in his scene with M. Dimanche. He was, in short, the embodiment of Molière's Don Juan, Goethe's Faust, Byron's Manfred, and Maturin's Melmoth – grand pictures drawn by the greatest geniuses of Europe, and to which neither the harmonies of Mozart nor the lyric strains of Rossini are lacking. Terrible pictures in which the power of evil existing in man is immortalized, and which are repeated from one century to another, whether the type come to parley with mankind by incarnating itself in Mirabeau, or be content to work in silence, like Bonaparte; or to goad on the universe by sarcasm, like the divine Rabelais; or again, to laugh at men instead of insulting things, like Maréchal de Richelieu; or, still better, perhaps, if it mock both men and things, like our most celebrated ambassador.

But the deep genius of Don Juan incorporated in advance all these. He played with everything. His life was a mockery, which embraced men, things, institutions, ideas. As for eternity, he had chatted for half an hour with Pope Julius II., and at the end of the conversation he said, laughing:

"If it were absolutely necessary to choose, I should rather believe in God than in the devil; power combined with goodness has always more possibilities than the spirit of evil."

"Yes; but God wants one to do penance in this world."

"Are you always thinking of your indulgences?" replied Belvidéro. "Well, I have a whole existence in reserve to repent the faults of my first life."

"Oh, if that is your idea of old age," cried the Pope, "you are in danger of being canonized."

"After your elevation to the papacy, one may expect anything."

And then they went to watch the workmen engaged in building the huge basilica consecrated to St. Peter.

"St. Peter is the genius who gave us our double power," said the Pope to Don Juan, "and he deserves this monument. But sometimes at night I fancy that a deluge will pass a sponge over all this, and it will need to be begun over again."

Don Juan and the Pope laughed. They understood each other. A fool would have gone next day to amuse himself with Julius II at Raphael's house or in the delightful Villa Madama; but Belvidéro went to see him officiate in his pontifical capacity, in order to convince himself of his suspicions. Under the influence of wine della Rovere would have been capable of forgetting himself and criticising the Apocalypse.

When Don Juan reached the age of sixty he went to live in Spain. There, in his old age, he married a young and charming Andalusian. But he was intentionally neither a good father nor a good husband. He had observed that we are never so tenderly loved as by the women to whom we scarcely give a thought. Doña Elvira, piously reared by an old aunt in the heart of Andalusia in a castle several leagues from San Lucas, was all devotion and meekness. Don Juan saw that this young girl was a woman to make a long fight with a passion before yielding to it, so he hoped to keep from her any love but his until after his death. It was a serious jest, a game of chess which he had reserved for his old age.

Warned by his father's mistakes, he determined to make the most trifling acts of his old age contribute to the success of the drama which was to take place at his deathbed. Therefore, the greater part of his wealth lay buried in the cellars of his palace at Ferrara, whither he seldom went. The rest of his fortune was invested in a life annuity, so that his wife and children might be interested in keeping him alive. This was a species of cleverness which his father should have practiced; but this Machiavellian scheme was unnecessary in his case. Young Philippe Belvidéro, his son, grew up

a Spaniard as conscientiously religious as his father was impious, on the principle of the proverb: "A miserly father, a spendthrift son."

The Abbot of San Lucas was selected by Don Juan to direct the consciences of the Duchess of Belvidéro and of Philippe. This ecclesiastic was a holy man, of fine carriage, well proportioned, with beautiful black eyes and a head like Tiberius. He was wearied with fasting, pale and worn, and continually battling with temptation, like all recluses. The old nobleman still hoped perhaps to be able to kill a monk before finishing his first lease of life. But, whether the Abbot was as clever as Don Juan, or whether Doña Elvira had more prudence or virtue than Spain usually accords to women, Don Juan was obliged to pass his last days like a country parson, without scandal. Sometimes he took pleasure in finding his wife and son remiss in their religious duties, and insisted imperiously that they should fulfil all the obligations imposed upon the faithful by the court of Rome. He was never so happy as when listening to the gallant Abbot of San Lucas, Doña Elvira and Philippe engaged in arguing a case of conscience.

Nevertheless, despite the great care which the lord of Belvidéro bestowed upon his person, the days of decrepitude arrived. With this age of pain came cries of helplessness, cries made the more piteous by the remembrance of his impetuous youth and his ripe maturity. This man, for whom the last jest in the farce was to make others believe in the laws and principles at which he scoffed, was compelled to close his eyes at night upon an uncertainty. This model of good breeding, this duke spirited in an orgy, this brilliant courtier, gracious toward women, whose hearts he had wrung as a peasant bends a willow wand, this man of genius, had an obstinate cough, a troublesome sciatica and a cruel gout. He saw his teeth leave him, as, at the end of an evening, the fairest, best dressed women depart one by one, leaving the ballroom deserted and empty. His bold hands trembled, his graceful limbs tottered, and then one night apoplexy turned its hooked and icy fingers around his throat. From this fateful day he became morose and harsh. He accused his wife and son of being insincere in their devotion, charging that their touching and gentle care was showered upon him so tenderly only because his money was all invested. Elvira and Philippe shed bitter tears, and redoubled their caresses to this malicious old man, whose broken voice would become affectionate to say:

"My friends, my dear wife, you will forgive me, will you not? I torment you sometimes. Ah, great God, how canst Thou make use of me thus to prove these two angelic creatures! I, who should be their joy, am their bane!"

It was thus that he held them at his bedside, making them forget whole months of impatience and cruelty by one hour in which he displayed to them the new treasures of his favor and a false tenderness. It was a paternal system which succeeded infinitely better than that which his father had formerly employed toward him. Finally he reached such a state of illness that manoeuvres like those of a small boat entering a dangerous canal were necessary in order to pus him to bed.

Then the day of death came. This brilliant and skeptical man, whose intellect only was left unimpaired by the general decay, lived between a doctor and a confessor, his two antipathies. But he was jovial with them. Was there not a bright light burning for him behind the veil of the future? Over this veil, leaden and impenetrable to others, transparent to him, the delicate and bewitching delights of youth played like shadows.

It was on a beautiful summer evening that Don Juan felt the approach of death. The Spanish sky was gloriously clear, the orange trees perfumed the air and the stars cast a fresh glowing light. Nature seemed to give pledges of his resurrection. A pious and obedient son regarded him with love and respect. About eleven o'clock he signified his wish to be left alone with this sincere being.

"Philippe," he began, in a voice so tender and affectionate that the young man trembled and wept with happiness, for his father had never said "Philippe" like this before. "Listen to me, my son," continued the dying man. "I have been a great sinner, and all my life I have thought about death. Formerly I was the friend of the great Pope Julius II. This illustrious pontiff feared that the excessive excitability of my feelings would cause me to commit some deadly sin at the moment of

my death, after I had received the blessed ointment. He made me a present of a flask of holy water that gushed forth from a rock in the desert. I kept the secret of the theft of the Church's treasure, but I am authorized to reveal the mystery to my son 'in articulo mortis.' You will find the flask in the drawer of the Gothic table which always stands at my bedside. The precious crystals may be of service to you also, my dearest Philippe. Will you swear to me by your eternal salvation that you will carry out my orders faithfully?"

Philippe looked at his father. Don Juan was too well versed in human expression not to know that he could die peacefully in perfect faith in such a look, as his father had died in despair at his own expression.

"You deserve a different father," continued Don Juan. "I must acknowledge that when the estimable Abbot of San Lucas was administering the viaticum' I was thinking of the incompatibility of two so wide-spreading powers as that of the devil and that of God."

"Oh, father!"

"And I said to myself that when Satan makes his peace he will be a great idiot if he does not bargain for the pardon of his followers. This thought haunted me. So, my child, I shall go to hell if you do not carry out my wishes."

"Oh, tell them to me at once, father!"

"As soon as I have closed my eyes," replied Don Juan, "and that may be in a few minutes, you must take my body, still warm, and lay it on a table in the middle of the room. Then put out the lamp – the light of the stars will be sufficient. You must take off my clothes, and while you recite 'Paters' and 'Aves' and uplift your soul to God, you must moisten my eyes, my lips, all my head first, and then my body, with this holy water. But, my dear son, the power of God is great. You must not be astonished at anything."

At this point Don Juan, feeling the approach of death, added in a terrible voice: "Be careful of the flask!"

Then he died gently in the arms of his son, whose tears fell upon his ironical and sallow face.

It was nearly midnight when Don Philippe Belvidéro placed his father's corpse on the table. After kissing the stern forehead and the gray hair he put out the lamp. The soft rays of the moonlight which cast fantastic reflections over the scenery allowed the pious Philippe to discern his father's body dimly, as something white in the midst of the darkness. The young man moistened a cloth in the liquid and then, deep in prayer, he faithfully anointed the revered head. The silence was intense. Then he heard indescribable rustlings, but he attributed them to the wind among the tree-tops. When he had bathed the right arm he felt himself rudely seized at the back of the neck by an arm, young and vigorous – the arm of his father! He gave a piercing cry, and dropped the phial, which fell on the floor and broke. The liquid flowed out.

The whole household rushed in, bearing torches. The cry had aroused and frightened them as if the trumpet of the last judgment had shaken the world. The room was crowded with people. The trembling throng saw Don Philippe, fainting, but held up by the powerful arm of his father, which clutched his neck. Then they saw a supernatural sight, the head of Don Juan, young and beautiful as an Antinoüs, a head with black hair, brilliant eyes and crimson lips, a head that moved in a blood-curdling manner without being able to stir the skeleton to which it belonged.

An old servant cried: "A miracle!"

And all the Spaniards repeated: "A miracle!"

Too pious to admit the possibility of magic, Doña Elvira sent for the Abbot of San Lucas. When the priest saw the miracle with his own eyes he resolved to profit by it, like a man of sense, and like an abbot who asked nothing better than to increase his revenues. Declaring that Don Juan must inevitably be canonized, he appointed his monastery for the ceremony of the apotheosis. The monastery, he said, should henceforth be called "San Juan de Lucas." At these words the head made a facetious grimace.

The taste of the Spaniards for this sort of solemnities is so well known that it should not be difficult to imagine the religious spectacle with which the abbey of San Lucas celebrated the translation of "the blessed Don Juan Belvidéro" in its church. A few days after the death of this illustrious nobleman, the miracle of his partial resurrection had been so thoroughly spread from village to village throughout a circle of more than fifty leagues round San Lucas that it was as good as a play to see the curious people on the road. They came from all sides, drawn by the prospect of a "Te Deum" chanted by the light of burning torches. The ancient mosque of the monastery of San Lucas, a wonderful building, erected by the Moors, which for three hundred years had resounded with the name of Jesus Christ instead of Allah, could not hold the crowd which was gathered to view the ceremony. Packed together like ants, the hidalgos in velvet mantles and armed with their good swords stood round the pillars, unable to find room to bend their knees, which they never bent elsewhere. Charming peasant women, whose dresses set off the beautiful lines of their figures, gave their arms to white-haired old men. Youths with glowing eyes found themselves beside old women decked out in gala dress. There were couples trembling with pleasure, curious-fiancées, led thither by their sweethearts, newly married couples and frightened children, holding one another by the hand. All this throng was there, rich in colors, brilliant in contrast, laden with flowers, making a soft tumult in the silence of the night. The great doors of the church opened.

Those who, having come too late, were obliged to stay outside, saw in the distance, through the three open doors, a scene of which the tawdry decorations of our modern operas can give but a faint idea. Devotees and sinners, intent upon winning the favor of a new saint, lighted thousands of candles in his honor inside the vast church, and these scintillating lights gave a magical aspect to the edifice. The black arcades, the columns with their capitals, the recessed chapels glittering with gold and silver, the galleries, the Moorish fretwork, the most delicate features of this delicate carving, were all revealed in the dazzling brightness like the fantastic figures which are formed in a glowing fire. It was a sea of light, surmounted at the end of the church by the gilded choir, where the high altar rose in glory, which rivaled the rising sun. But the magnificence of the golden lamps, the silver candlesticks, the banners, the tassels, the saints and the "ex voto" paled before the reliquary in which Don Juan lay. The body of the blasphemer was resplendent with gems, flowers, crystals, diamonds, gold, and plumes as white as the wings of a seraphim; it replaced a picture of Christ on the altar. Around him burned wax candles, which threw out waves of light. The good Abbot of San Lucas, clad in his pontifical robes, with his jeweled mitre, his surplice and his golden crozier reclined, king of the choir, in a large armchair, amid all his clergy, who were impassive men with silver hair, and who surrounded him like the confessing saints whom the painters group round the Lord. The precentor and the dignitaries of the order, decorated with the glittering insignia of their ecclesiastical vanities, came and went among the clouds of incense like planets revolving in the firmament.

When the hour of triumph was come the chimes awoke the echoes of the countryside, and this immense assembly raised its voice to God in the first cry of praise which begins the "Te Deum."

Sublime exultation! There were voices pure and high, ecstatic women's voices, blended with the deep sonorous tones of the men, thousands of voices so powerful that they drowned the organ in spite of the bellowing of its pipes. The shrill notes of the choir-boys and the powerful rhythm of the basses inspired pretty thoughts of the combination of childhood and strength in this delightful concert of human voices blended in an outpouring of love.

"Te Deum laudamus!"

In the midst of this cathedral, black with kneeling men and women, the chant burst forth like a light which gleams suddenly in the night, and the silence was broken as by a peal of thunder. The voices rose with the clouds of incense which threw diaphanous, bluish veils over the quaint marvels of the architecture. All was richness, perfume, light and melody.

At the moment at which this symphony of love and gratitude rolled toward the altar, Don Juan, too polite not to express his thanks and too witty not to appreciate a jest, responded by a frightful

laugh, and straightened up in his reliquary. But, the devil having given him a hint of the danger he ran of being taken for an ordinary man, for a saint, a Boniface or a Pantaléon, he interrupted this harmony of love by a shriek in which the thousand voices of hell joined. Earth lauded, heaven condemned. The church trembled on its ancient foundations.

"Te Deum laudamus!" sang the crowd.

"Go to the devil, brute beasts that you are! 'Carajos demonios!' Beasts! what idiots you are with your God!"

And a torrent of curses rolled forth like a stream of burning lava at an eruption of Vesuvius.

"'Deus sabaoth! sabaoth'!" cried the Christians.

Then the living arm was thrust out of the reliquary and waved threateningly over the assembly with a gesture full of despair and irony.

"The saint is blessing us!" said the credulous old women, the children and the young maids.

It is thus that we are often deceived in our adorations. The superior man mocks those who compliment him, and compliments those whom he mocks in the depths of his heart.

When the Abbot, bowing low before the altar, chanted: "'Sancte Johannes, ora pro nobis'!" he heard distinctly: "'O coglione'!"

"What is happening up there?" cried the superior, seeing the reliquary move.

"The saint is playing devil!" replied the Abbot.

At this the living head tore itself violently away from the dead body and fell upon the yellow pate of the priest.

"Remember, Doña Elvira!" cried the head, fastening its teeth in the head of the Abbot.

The latter gave a terrible shriek, which threw the crowd into a panic. The priests rushed to the assistance of their chief.

"Imbecile! Now say that there is a God!" cried the voice, just as the Abbot expired.

THE AGE FOR LOVE
BY PAUL BOURGET

When I submitted the plan of my Inquiry Upon the Age for Love to the editor-in-chief of the Boulevard, the highest type of French literary paper, he seemed astonished that an idea so journalistic – that was his word – should have been evolved from the brain of his most recent acquisition. I had been with him two weeks and it was my first contribution. "Give me some details, my dear Labarthe," he said, in a somewhat less insolent manner than was his wont. After listening to me for a few moments he continued: "That is good. You will go and interview certain men and women, first upon the age at which one loves the most, next upon the age when one is most loved? Is that your idea? And now to whom will you go first?"

"I have prepared a list," I replied, and took from my pocket a sheet of paper. I had jotted down the names of a number of celebrities whom I proposed to interview on this all-important question, and I began to read over my list. It contained two ex-government officials, a general, a Dominican father, four actresses, two café-concert singers, four actors, two financiers, two lawyers, a surgeon and a lot of literary celebrities. At some of the names my chief would nod his approval, at others he would say curtly, with an affectation of American manners, "Bad; strike it off," until I came to the name I had kept for the last, that of Pierre Fauchery, the famous novelist.

"Strike that off," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "He is not on good terms with us."

"And yet," I suggested, "is there any one whose opinion would be of greater interest to reading men as well as to women? I had even thought of beginning with him."

"The devil you had!" interrupted the editor-in-chief. "It is one of Fauchery's principles not to see any reporters. I have sent him ten if I have one, and he has shown them all the door. The Boulevard does not relish such treatment, so we have given him some pretty hard hits."

"Nevertheless, I will have an interview with Fauchery for the Boulevard," was my reply. "I am sure of it."

"If you succeed," he replied, "I'll raise your salary. That man makes me tired with his scorn of newspaper notoriety. He must take his share of it, like the rest. But you will not succeed. What makes you think you can?"

"Permit me to tell you my reason later. In forty-eight hours you will see whether I have succeeded or not."

"Go and do not spare the fellow."

Decidedly. I had made some progress as a journalist, even in my two weeks' apprenticeship, if I could permit Pascal to speak in this way of the man I most admired among living writers. Since that not far-distant time when, tired of being poor, I had made up my mind to cast my lot with the multitude in Paris, I had tried to lay aside my old self, as lizards do their skins, and I had almost succeeded. In a former time, a former time that was but yesterday, I knew – for in a drawer full of poems, dramas and half-finished tales I had proof of it – that there had once existed a certain Jules Labarthe who had come to Paris with the hope of becoming a great man. That person believed in Literature with a capital "L;" in the Ideal, another capital; in Glory, a third capital. He was now dead and buried. Would he some day, his position assured, begin to write once more from pure love of his art? Possibly, but for the moment I knew only the energetic, practical Labarthe, who had joined the procession with the idea of getting into the front rank, and of obtaining as soon as possible an income of thirty thousand francs a year. What would it matter to this second individual if that vile Pascal should boast of having stolen a march on the most delicate, the most powerful of the heirs of Balzac, since I, the new Labarthe, was capable of looking forward to an operation which required about as much delicacy as some of the performances of my editor-in-chief? I had, as a matter of fact, a sure

means of obtaining the interview. It was this: When I was young and simple I had sent some verses and stories to Pierre Fauchery, the same verses and stories the refusal of which by four editors had finally made me decide to enter the field of journalism. The great writer was traveling at this time, but he had replied to me. I had responded by a letter to which he again replied, this time with an invitation to call upon him. I went I did not find him. I went again. I did not find him that time. Then a sort of timidity prevented my returning to the charge. So I had never met him. He knew me only as the young Elia of my two epistles. This is what I counted upon to extort from him the favor of an interview which he certainly would refuse to a mere newspaper man. My plan was simple; to present myself at his house, to be received, to conceal my real occupation, to sketch vaguely a subject for a novel in which there should occur a discussion upon the Age for Love, to make him talk and then when he should discover his conversation in print – here I began to feel some remorse. But I stifled it with the terrible phrase, "the struggle for life," and also by the recollection of numerous examples culled from the firm with which I now had the honor of being connected.

The morning after I had had this very literary conversation with my honorable director, I rang at the door of the small house in the Rue Desbordes-Valmore where Pierre Fauchery lived, in a retired corner of Passy. Having taken up my pen to tell a plain unvarnished tale I do not see how I can conceal the wretched feeling of pleasure which, as I rang the bell, warmed my heart at the thought of the good joke I was about to play on the owner of this peaceful abode.

Even after making up one's mind to the sacrifices I had decided upon, there is always left a trace of envy for those who have triumphed in the melancholy struggle for literary supremacy. It was a real disappointment to me when the servant replied, ill-humoredly, that M. Fauchery was not in Paris. I asked when he would return. The servant did not know. I asked for his address. The servant did not know that. Poor lion, who thought he had secured anonymity for his holiday! A half-hour later I had discovered that he was staying for the present at the Château de Proby, near Nemours. I had merely had to make inquiries of his publisher. Two hours later I bought my ticket at the Gare de Lyon for the little town chosen by Balzac as the scene for his delicious story of Ursule Mirouet. I took a traveling bag and was prepared to spend the night there. In case I failed to see the master that afternoon I had decided to make sure of him the next morning. Exactly seven hours after the servant, faithful to his trust, had declared that he did not know where his master was staying, I was standing in the hall of the château waiting for my card to be sent up. I had taken care to write on it a reminder of our conversation of the year before, and this time, after a ten-minute wait in the hall, during which I noticed with singular curiosity and *malice* two very elegant and very pretty young women going out for a walk, I was admitted to his presence. "Aha," I said to myself, "this then is the secret of his exile; the interview promises well!"

The novelist received me in a cosy little room, with a window opening onto the park, already beginning to turn yellow with the advancing autumn. A wood fire burned in the fireplace and lighted up the walls which were hung with flowered cretonne and on which could be distinguished several colored English prints representing cross-country rides and the jumping of hedges. Here was the worldly environment with which Fauchery is so often reproached. But the books and papers that littered the table bore witness that the present occupant of this charming retreat remained a substantial man of letters. His habit of constant work was still further attested by his face, which I admit, gave me all at once a feeling of remorse for the trick I was about to play him. If I had found him the snobbish pretender whom the weekly newspapers were in the habit of ridiculing, it would have been a delight to outwit his diplomacy. But no! I saw, as he put down his pen to receive me, a man about fifty-seven years old, with a face that bore the marks of reflection, eyes tired from sleeplessness, a brow heavy with thought, who said as he pointed to an easy chair, "You will excuse me, my dear confrère, for keeping you waiting." I, his dear confrère! Ah! if he had known! "You see," and he pointed to the page still wet with ink, "that man cannot be free from the slavery of furnishing copy. One has less

facility at my age than at yours. Now, let us speak of yourself. How do you happen to be at Nemours? What have you been doing since the story and the verses you were kind enough to send me?"

It is vain to try to sacrifice once for all one's youthful ideals. When a man has loved literature as I loved it at twenty, he cannot be satisfied at twenty-six to give up his early passion, even at the bidding of implacable necessity. So Pierre Fauchery remembered my poor verses! He had actually read my story! His allusion proved it. Could I tell him at such a moment that since the creation of those first works I had despaired of myself, and that I had changed my gun to the other shoulder? The image of the Boulevard office rose suddenly before me. I heard the voice of the editor-in-chief saying, "Interview Fauchery? You will never accomplish that;" so, faithful to my self-imposed rôle, I replied, "I have retired to Nemours to work upon a novel called The Age for Love, and it is on this subject that I wished to consult you, my dear master."

It seemed to me – it may possibly have been an illusion – that at the announcement of the so-called title of my so-called novel, a smile and a shadow flitted over Fauchery's eyes and mouth. A vision of the two young women I had met in the hall came back to me. Was the author of so many great masterpieces of analysis about to live a new book before writing it? I had no time to answer this question, for, with a glance at an onyx vase containing some cigarettes of Turkish tobacco, he offered me one, lighted one himself and began first to question, then to reply to me. I listened while he thought aloud and had almost forgotten my Machiavellian combination, so keen was my relish of the joyous intimacy of this communion with a mind I had passionately loved in his works. He was the first of the great writers of our day whom I had thus approached on something like terms of intimacy. As we talked I observed the strange similarity between his spoken and his written words. I admired the charming simplicity with which he abandoned himself to the pleasures of imagination, his superabundant intelligence, the liveliness of his impressions and his total absence of arrogance and of pose.

"There is no such thing as an age for love," he said in substance, "because the man capable of loving – in the complex and modern sense of love as a sort of ideal exaltation – never ceases to love. I will go further; he never ceases to love the same person. You know the experiment that a contemporary physiologist tried with a series of portraits to determine in what the indefinable resemblances called family likeness consisted? He took photographs of twenty persons of the same blood, then he photographed these photographs on the same plate, one over the other. In this way he discovered the common features which determined the type. Well, I am convinced that if we could try a similar experiment and photograph one upon another the pictures of the different women whom the same man has loved or thought he had loved in the course of his life we should discover that all these women resembled one another. The most inconsistent have cherished one and the same being through five or six or even twenty different embodiments. The main point is to find out at what age they have met the woman who approaches nearest to the one whose image they have constantly borne within themselves. For them that would be the age for love.

"The age for being loved?" he continued. "The deepest of all the passions I have ever known a man to inspire was in the case of one of my masters, a poet, and he was sixty years old at the time. It is true that he still held himself as erect as a young man, he came and went with a step as light as yours, he conversed like Rivarol, he composed verses as beautiful as De Vigny's. He was besides very poor, very lonely and very unhappy, having lost one after another, his wife and his children. You remember the words of Shakespeare's Moor: 'She loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved her that she did pity them.'

"So it was that this great artist inspired in a beautiful, noble and wealthy young Russian woman, a devotion so passionate that because of him she never married. She found a way to take care of him, day and night, in spite of his family, during his last illness, and at the present time, having bought from his heirs all of the poet's personal belongings, she keeps the apartment where he lived just as it was at the time of his death. That was years ago. In her case she found in a man three times her own

age the person who corresponded to a certain ideal which she carried in her heart. Look at Goethe, at Lamartine and at many others! To depict feelings on this high plane, you must give up the process of minute and insignificant observation which is the bane of the artists of to-day. In order that a sixty-year-old lover should appear neither ridiculous nor odious you must apply to him what the elder Corneille so proudly said of himself in his lines to the marquise:

"'Cependant, j'ai quelques charmes
Qui sont assez eclatants
Pour n'avoir pas trop d'alarmes
De ces ravages du temps.'

"Have the courage to analyze great emotions to create characters who shall be lofty and true. The whole art of the analytical novel lies there."

As he spoke the master had such a light of intellectual certainty in his eyes that to me he seemed the embodiment of one of those great characters he had been urging me to describe. It made me feel that the theory of this man, himself almost a sexagenarian, that at any age one may inspire love, was not unreasonable! The contrast between the world of ideas in which he moved and the atmosphere of the literary shop in which for the last few months I had been stifling was too strong. The dreams of my youth were realized in this man whose gifts remained unimpaired after the production of thirty volumes and whose face, growing old, was a living illustration of the beautiful saying: "Since we must wear out, let us wear out nobly." His slender figure bespoke the austerity of long hours of work; his firm mouth showed his decision of character; his brow, with its deep furrows, had the paleness of the paper over which he so often bent; and yet, the refinement of his hands, so well cared for, the sober elegance of his dress and an aristocratic air that was natural to him showed that the finer professional virtues had been cultivated in the midst of a life of frivolous temptations. These temptations had been no more of a disturbance to his ethical and spiritual nature than the academic honors, the financial successes, the numerous editions that had been his. Withal he was an awfully good fellow, for, after having talked at great length with me, he ended by saying, "Since you are staying in Nemours I hope to see you often, and to-day I cannot let you go without presenting you to my hostess."

What could I say? This was the way in which a mere reporter on the Boulevard found himself installed at a five-o'clock tea-table in the salon of a château, where surely no newspaper man had ever before set foot and was presented as a young poet and novelist of the future to the old Marquise de Proby, whose guest the master was. This amiable white-haired dowager questioned me upon my alleged work and I replied equivocally, with blushes, which the good lady must have attributed to bashful timidity. Then, as though some evil genius had conspired to multiply the witnesses of my bad conduct, the two young women whom I had seen going out, returned in the midst of my unlooked-for visit. Ah, my interview with this student of femininity upon the Age for Love was about to have a living commentary! How it would illumine his words to hear him conversing with these new arrivals! One was a young girl of possibly twenty – a Russian if I rightly understood the name. She was rather tall, with a long face lighted up by two very gentle black eyes, singular in their fire and intensity. She bore a striking resemblance to the portrait attributed to Froncia in the Salon Carré of the Louvre which goes by the name of the "Man in Black," because the color of his clothes and his mantle. About her mouth and nostrils was that same subdued nervousness, that same restrained feverishness which gives to the portrait its striking qualities. I had not been there a quarter of an hour before I had guessed from the way she watched and listened to Fauchery what a passionate interest the old master inspired in her. When he spoke she paid rapt attention. When she spoke to him, I felt her voice shiver, if I may use the word, and he, he glorious writer, surfeited with triumphs, exhausted by his labors, seemed, as soon as he felt the radiance of her glance of ingenuous idolatry, to recover that vivacity, that elasticity of impression, which is the sovereign grace of youthful lovers.

"I understand now why he cited Goethe and the young girl of Marienbad," said I to myself with a laugh, as my hired carriage sped on toward Nemours. "He was thinking of himself. He is in love with that child, and she is in love with him. We shall hear of his marrying her. There's a wedding that will call forth copy, and when Pascal hears that I witnessed the courtship – but just now I must think of my interview. Won't Fauchery be surprised to read it day after to-morrow in his paper? But does he read the papers? It may not be right but what harm will it do him? Besides, it's a part of the struggle for life." It was by such reasoning, I remember, the reasoning of a man determined to arrive that I tried to lull to sleep the inward voice that cried, "You have no right to put on paper, to give to the public what this noble writer said to you, supposing that he was receiving a poet, not a reporter." But I heard also the voice of my chief saying, "You will never succeed." And this second voice, I am ashamed to confess, triumphed over the other with all the more ease because I was obliged to do something to kill time. I reached Nemours too late for the train which would have brought me back to Paris about dinner time. At the old inn they gave me a room which was clean and quiet, a good place to write, so I spent the evening until bedtime composing the first of the articles which were to form my inquiry. I scribbled away under the vivid impressions of the afternoon, my powers as well as my nerves spurred by a touch of remorse. Yes, I scribbled four pages which would have been no disgrace to the Journal des Goncourts, that exquisite manual of the perfect reporter. It was all there, my journey, my arrival at the chateau, a sketch of the quaint eighteenth century building, with its fringe of trees and its well-kept walks, the master's room, the master himself and his conversation; the tea at the end and the smile of the old novelist in the midst of a circle of admirers, old and young. It lacked only a few closing lines. "I will add these in the morning," I thought, and went to bed with a feeling of duty performed, such is the nature of a writer. Under the form of an interview I had done, and I knew it, the best work of my life.

What happens while we sleep? Is there, unknown to us, a secret and irresistible ferment of ideas while our senses are closed to the impressions of the outside world? Certain it is that on awakening I am apt to find myself in a state of mind very different from that in which I went to sleep. I had not been awake ten minutes before the image of Pierre Fauchery came up before me, and at the same time the thought that I had taken a base advantage of the kindness of his reception of me became quite unbearable. I felt a passionate longing to see him again, to ask his pardon for my deception. I wished to tell him who I was, with what purpose I had gone to him and that I regretted it. But there was no need of a confession. It would be enough to destroy the pages I had written the night before. With this idea I arose. Before tearing them up, I reread them. And then – any writer will understand me – and then they seemed to me so brilliant that I did not tear them up. Fauchery is so intelligent, so generous, was the thought that crossed my mind. What is there in this interview, after all, to offend him? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Even if I should go to him again this very morning, tell him my story and that upon the success of my little inquiry my whole future as a journalist might depend? When he found that I had had five years of poverty and hard work without accomplishing anything, and that I had had to go onto a paper in order to earn the very bread I ate, he would pardon me, he would pity me and he would say, "Publish your interview." Yes, but what if he should forbid my publishing it? But no, he would not do that.

I passed the morning in considering my latest plan. A certain shyness made it very painful to me. But it might at the same time conciliate my delicate scruples, my "amour-propre" as an ambitious chronicler, and the interests of my pocket-book. I knew that Pascal had the name of being very generous with an interview article if it pleased him. And besides, had he not promised me a reward if I succeeded with Fauchery? In short, I had decided to try my experiment, when, after a hasty breakfast, I saw, on stepping into the carriage I had had the night before, a victoria with coat-of-arms drive rapidly past and was stunned at recognizing Fauchery himself, apparently lost in a gloomy revery that was in singular contrast to his high spirits of the night before. A small trunk on the coachman's seat was a sufficient indication that he was going to the station. The train for Paris left in twelve minutes,

time enough for me to pack my things pell-mell into my valise and hurriedly to pay my bill. The same carriage which was to have taken me to the Château de Proby carried me to the station at full speed, and when the train left I was seated in an empty compartment opposite the famous writer, who was saying to me, "You, too, deserting Nemours? Like me, you work best in Paris."

The conversation begun in this way, might easily have led to the confession I had resolved to make. But in the presence of my unexpected companion I was seized with an unconquerable shyness, moreover he inspired me with a curiosity which was quite equal to my shyness. Any number of circumstances, from a telegram from a sick relative to the most commonplace matter of business, might have explained his sudden departure from the château where I had left him so comfortably installed the night before. But that the expression of his face should have changed as it had, that in eighteen hours he should have become the careworn, discouraged being he now seemed, when I had left him so pleased with life, so happy, so assiduous in his attentions to that pretty girl. Mademoiselle de Russaie, who loved him and whom he seemed to love, was a mystery which took complete possession of me, this time without any underlying professional motive. He was to give me the key before we reached Paris. At any rate I shall always believe that part of his conversation was in an indirect way a confidence. He was still unstrung by the unexpected incident which had caused both his hasty departure and the sudden metamorphosis in what he himself, if he had been writing, would have called his "intimate heaven." The story he told me was "per sfogarsi," as Bayle loved to say; his idea was that I would not discover the real hero. I shall always believe that it was his own story under another name, and I love to believe it because it was so exactly his way of looking at things. It was apropos of the supposed subject of my novel – oh, irony! – apropos of the real subject of my interview that he began.

"I have been thinking about our conversation and about your book, and I am afraid that I expressed myself badly yesterday. When I said that one may love and be loved at any age I ought to have added that sometimes this love comes too late. It comes when one no longer has the right to prove to the loved one how much she is loved, except by love's sacrifice. I should like to share with you a human document, as they say to-day, which is in itself a drama with a dénouement. But I must ask you not to use it, for the secret is not my own." With the assurance of my discretion he went on: "I had a friend, a companion of my own age, who, when he was twenty, had loved a young girl. He was poor, she was rich. Her family separated them. The girl married some one else and almost immediately afterward she died. My friend lived. Some day you will know for yourself that it is almost as true to say that one recovers from all things as that there is nothing which does not leave its scar. I had been the confidant of his serious passion, and I became the confidant of the various affairs that followed that first ineffaceable disappointment. He felt, he inspired, other loves. He tasted other joys. He endured other sorrows, and yet when we were alone and when we touched upon those confidences that come from the heart's depths, the girl who was the ideal of his twentieth year reappeared in his words. How many times he has said to me, 'In others I have always looked for her and as I have never found her, I have never truly loved any one but her.'"

"And had she loved him?" I interrupted.

"He did not think so," replied Fauchery. "At least she had never told him so. Well, you must now imagine my friend at my age or almost there. You must picture him growing gray, tired of life and convinced that he had at last discovered the secret of peace. At this time he met, while visiting some relatives in a country house, a mere girl of twenty, who was the image, the haunting image of her whom he had hoped to marry thirty years before. It was one of those strange resemblances which extend from the color of the eyes to the 'timbre' of the voice, from the smile to the thought, from the gestures to the finest feelings of the heart. I could not, in a few disjointed phrases describe to you the strange emotions of my friend. It would take pages and pages to make you understand the tenderness, both present and at the same time retrospective, for the dead through the living; the hypnotic condition of the soul which does not know where dreams and memories end and present

feeling begins; the daily commingling of the most unreal thing in the world, the phantom of a lost love, with the freshest, the most actual, the most irresistibly naïve and spontaneous thing in it, a young girl. She comes, she goes, she laughs, she sings, you go about with her in the intimacy of country life, and at her side walks one long dead. After two weeks of almost careless abandon to the dangerous delights of this inward agitation imagine my friend entering by chance one morning one of the less frequented rooms of the house, a gallery, where, among other pictures, hung a portrait of himself, painted when he was twenty-five. He approaches the portrait abstractedly. There had been a fire in the room, so that a slight moisture dimmed the glass which protected the pastel, and on this glass, because of this moisture, he sees distinctly the trace of two lips which had been placed upon the eyes of the portrait, two small delicate lips, the sight of which makes his heart beat. He leaves the gallery, questions a servant, who tells him that no one but the young woman he has in mind has been in the room that morning."

"What then?" I asked, as he paused.

"My friend returned to the gallery, looked once more at the adorable imprint of the most innocent, the most passionate of caresses. A mirror hung near by, where he could compare his present with his former face, the man he was with the man he had been. He never told me and I never asked what his feelings were at that moment. Did he feel that he was too culpable to have inspired a passion in a young girl whom he would have been a fool, almost a criminal, to marry? Did he comprehend that through his age which was so apparent, it was his youth which this child loved? Did he remember, with a keenness that was all too sad, that other, who had never given him a kiss like that at a time when he might have returned it? I only know that he left the same day, determined never again to see one whom he could no longer love as he had loved the other, with the hope, the purity, the soul of a man of twenty."

A few hours after this conversation, I found myself once more in the office of the Boulevard, seated in Pascal's den, and he was saying, "Already? Have you accomplished your interview with Pierre Fauchery?"

"He would not even receive me," I replied, boldly.

"What did I tell you?" he sneered, shrugging his big shoulders. "We'll get even with him on his next volume. But you know, Labarthe, as long as you continue to have that innocent look about you, you can't expect to succeed in newspaper work."

I bore with the ill-humor of my chief. What would he have said if he had known that I had in my pocket an interview and in my head an anecdote which were material for a most successful story? And he has never had either the interview or the story. Since then I have made my way in the line where he said I should fail. I have lost my innocent look and I earn my thirty thousand francs a year, and more. I have never had the same pleasure in the printing of the most profitable, the most brilliant article that I had in consigning to oblivion the sheets relating my visit to Nemours. I often think that I have not served the cause of letters as I wanted to, since, with all my laborious work I have never written a book. And yet when I recall the irresistible impulse of respect which prevented me from committing toward a dearly loved master a most profitable but infamous indiscretion, I say to myself, "If you have not served the cause of letters, you have not betrayed it." And this is the reason, now that Fauchery is no longer of this world, that it seems to me that the time has come for me to relate my first interview. There is none of which I am more proud.

MATEO FALCONE
BY PROSPER MERIMEE

On leaving Porto-Vecchio from the northwest and directing his steps towards the interior of the island, the traveller will notice that the land rises rapidly, and after three hours' walking over tortuous paths obstructed by great masses of rock and sometimes cut by ravines, he will find himself on the border of a great mâquis. The mâquis is the domain of the Corsican shepherds and of those who are at variance with justice. It must be known that, in order to save himself the trouble of manuring his field, the Corsican husbandman sets fire to a piece of woodland. If the flame spread farther than is necessary, so much the worse! In any case he is certain of a good crop from the land fertilized by the ashes of the trees which grow upon it. He gathers only the heads of his grain, leaving the straw, which it would be unnecessary labor to cut. In the following spring the roots that have remained in the earth without being destroyed send up their tufts of sprouts, which in a few years reach a height of seven or eight feet. It is this kind of tangled thicket that is called a mâquis. They are made up of different kinds of trees and shrubs, so crowded and mingled together at the caprice of nature that only with an axe in hand can a man open a passage through them, and mâquis are frequently seen so thick and bushy that the wild sheep themselves cannot penetrate them.

If you have killed a man, go into the mâquis of Porto-Vecchio. With a good gun and plenty of powder and balls, you can live there in safety. Do not forget a brown cloak furnished with a hood, which will serve you for both cover and mattress. The shepherds will give you chestnuts, milk and cheese, and you will have nothing to fear from justice nor the relatives of the dead except when it is necessary for you to descend to the city to replenish your ammunition.

When I was in Corsica in 18 – , Mateo Falcone had his house half a league from this mâquis. He was rich enough for that country, living in noble style – that is to say, doing nothing – on the income from his flocks, which the shepherds, who are a kind of nomads, lead to pasture here and there on the mountains. When I saw him, two years after the event that I am about to relate, he appeared to me to be about fifty years old or more. Picture to yourself a man, small but robust, with curly hair, black as jet, an aquiline nose, thin lips, large, restless eyes, and a complexion the color of tanned leather. His skill as a marksman was considered extraordinary even in his country, where good shots are so common. For example, Mateo would never fire at a sheep with buckshot; but at a hundred and twenty paces, he would drop it with a ball in the head or shoulder, as he chose. He used his arms as easily at night as during the day. I was told this feat of his skill, which will, perhaps, seem impossible to those who have not travelled in Corsica. A lighted candle was placed at eighty paces, behind a paper transparency about the size of a plate. He would take aim, then the candle would be extinguished, and, at the end of a moment, in the most complete darkness, he would fire and hit the paper three times out of four.

With such a transcendent accomplishment, Mateo Falcone had acquired a great reputation. He was said to be as good a friend as he was a dangerous enemy; accommodating and charitable, he lived at peace with all the world in the district of Porto-Vecchio. But it is said of him that in Corte, where he had married his wife, he had disembarrassed himself very vigorously of a rival who was considered as redoubtable in war as in love; at least, a certain gun-shot which surprised this rival as he was shaving before a little mirror hung in his window was attributed to Mateo. The affair was smoothed over and Mateo was married. His wife Giuseppa had given him at first three daughters (which infuriated him), and finally a son, whom he named Fortunato, and who became the hope of his family, the inheritor of the name. The daughters were well married: their father could count at need on the poignards and carbines of his sons-in-law. The son was only ten years old, but he already gave promise of fine attributes.

On a certain day in autumn, Mateo set out at an early hour with his wife to visit one of his flocks in a clearing of the mâquis. The little Fortunato wanted to go with them, but the clearing was too far away; moreover, it was necessary some one should stay to watch the house; therefore the father refused: it will be seen whether or not he had reason to repent.

He had been gone some hours, and the little Fortunato was tranquilly stretched out in the sun, looking at the blue mountains, and thinking that the next Sunday he was going to dine in the city with his uncle, the Caporal [Note: Civic Official], when he was suddenly interrupted in his meditations by the firing of a musket. He got up and turned to that side of the plain whence the noise came. Other shots followed, fired at irregular intervals, and each time nearer; at last, in the path which led from the plain to Mateo's house, appeared a man wearing the pointed hat of the mountaineers, bearded, covered with rags, and dragging himself along with difficulty by the support of his gun. He had just received a wound in his thigh.

This man was an outlaw, who, having gone to the town by night to buy powder, had fallen on the way into an ambuscade of Corsican light-infantry. After a vigorous defense he was fortunate in making his retreat, closely followed and firing from rock to rock. But he was only a little in advance of the soldiers, and his wound prevented him from gaining the mâquis before being overtaken.

He approached Fortunato and said: "You are the son of Mateo Falcone?" – "Yes."

"I am Gianetto Saupiero. I am followed by the yellow-collars [Note:

Slang for Gendarmes.]. Hide me, for I can go no farther."

"And what will my father say if I hide you without his permission?"

"He will say that you have done well."

"How do you know?"

"Hide me quickly; they are coming."

"Wait till my father gets back."

"How can I wait? Malediction! They will be here in five minutes. Come, hide me, or I will kill you."

Fortunato answered him with the utmost coolness:

"Your gun is empty, and there are no more cartridges in your belt."

"I have my stiletto."

"But can you run as fast as I can?"

He gave a leap and put himself out of reach.

"You are not the son of Mateo Falcone! Will you then let me be captured before your house?"

The child appeared moved.

"What will you give me if I hide you?" said he, coming nearer.

The outlaw felt in a leather pocket that hung from his belt, and took out a five-franc piece, which he had doubtless saved to buy ammunition with. Fortunato smiled at the sight of the silver piece; he snatched it, and said to Gianetto:

"Fear nothing."

Immediately he made a great hole in a pile of hay that was near the house. Gianetto crouched down in it and the child covered him in such a way that he could breathe without it being possible to suspect that the hay concealed a man. He bethought himself further, and, with the subtlety of a tolerably ingenious savage, placed a cat and her kittens on the pile, that it might not appear to have been recently disturbed. Then, noticing the traces of blood on the path near the house, he covered them carefully with dust, and, that done, he again stretched himself out in the sun with the greatest tranquillity.

A few moments afterwards, six men in brown uniforms with yellow collars, and commanded by an Adjutant, were before Mateo's door. This Adjutant was a distant relative of Falcone's. (In Corsica the degrees of relationship are followed much further than elsewhere.) His name was Tiodoro Gamba; he was an active man, much dreaded by the outlaws, several of whom he had already entrapped.

"Good day, little cousin," said he, approaching Fortunato; "how tall you have grown. Have you seen a man go past here just now?"

"Oh! I am not yet so tall as you, my cousin," replied the child with a simple air.

"You soon will be. But haven't you seen a man go by here, tell me?"

"If I have seen a man go by?"

"Yes, a man with a pointed hat of black velvet, and a vest embroidered with red and yellow."

"A man with a pointed hat, and a vest embroidered with red and yellow?"

"Yes, answer quickly, and don't repeat my questions?"

"This morning the curé passed before our door on his horse, Piero. He asked me how papa was, and I answered him – "

"Ah, you little scoundrel, you are playing sly! Tell me quickly which way Gianetto went? We are looking for him, and I am sure he took this path."

"Who knows?"

"Who knows? It is I know that you have seen him."

"Can any one see who passes when they are asleep?"

"You were not asleep, rascal; the shooting woke you up."

"Then you believe, cousin, that your guns make so much noise? My father's carbine has the advantage of them."

"The devil take you, you cursed little scapegrace! I am certain that you have seen Gianetto. Perhaps, even, you have hidden him. Come, comrades, go into the house and see if our man is there. He could only go on one foot, and the knave has too much good sense to try to reach the mâquis limping like that. Moreover, the bloody tracks stop here."

"And what will papa say?" asked Fortunato with a sneer; "what will he say if he knows that his house has been entered while he was away?"

"You rascal!" said the Adjutant, taking him by the ear, "do you know that it only remains for me to make you change your tone? Perhaps you will speak differently after I have given you twenty blows with the flat of my sword."

Fortunato continued to sneer.

"My father is Mateo Falcone," said he with emphasis.

"You little scamp, you know very well that I can carry you off to Corte or to Bastia. I will make you lie in a dungeon, on straw, with your feet in shackles, and I will have you guillotined if you don't tell me where Gianetto is."

The child burst out laughing at this ridiculous menace. He repeated:

"My father is Mateo Falcone."

"Adjutant," said one of the soldiers in a low voice, "let us have no quarrels with Mateo."

Gamba appeared evidently embarrassed. He spoke in an undertone with the soldiers who had already visited the house. This was not a very long operation, for the cabin of a Corsican consists only of a single square room, furnished with a table, some benches, chests, housekeeping utensils and those of the chase. In the meantime, little Fortunato petted his cat and seemed to take a wicked enjoyment in the confusion of the soldiers and of his cousin.

One of the men approached the pile of hay. He saw the cat, and gave the pile a careless thrust with his bayonet, shrugging his shoulders as if he felt that his precaution was ridiculous. Nothing moved; the boy's face betrayed not the slightest emotion.

The Adjutant and his troop were cursing their luck. Already they were looking in the direction of the plain, as if disposed to return by the way they had come, when their chief, convinced that menaces would produce no impression on Falcone's son, determined to make a last effort, and try the effect of caresses and presents.

"My little cousin," said he, "you are a very wide-awake little fellow. You will get along. But you are playing a naughty game with me; and if I wasn't afraid of making trouble for my cousin, Mateo, the devil take me! but I would carry you off with me."

"Bah!"

"But when my cousin comes back I shall tell him about this, and he will whip you till the blood comes for having told such lies."

"You don't say so!"

"You will see. But hold on! – be a good boy and I will give you something."

"Cousin, let me give you some advice: if you wait much longer Gianetto will be in the mâquis and it will take a smarter man than you to follow him."

The Adjutant took from his pocket a silver watch worth about ten crowns, and noticing that Fortunato's eyes sparkled at the sight of it, said, holding the watch by the end; of its steel chain:

"Rascal! you would like to have such a watch as that hung around your neck, wouldn't you, and to walk in the streets of Porto-Vecchio proud as a peacock? People would ask you what time it was, and you would say: 'Look at my watch.'"

"When I am grown up, my uncle, the Caporal, will give me a watch."

"Yes; but your uncle's little boy has one already; not so fine as this either. But then, he is younger than you."

The child sighed.

"Well! Would you like this watch, little cousin?"

Fortunato, casting sidelong glances at the watch, resembled a cat that has been given a whole chicken. It feels that it is being made sport of, and does not dare to use its claws; from time to time it turns its eyes away so as not to be tempted, licking its jaws all the while, and has the appearance of saying to its master, "How cruel your joke is!"

However, the Adjutant seemed in earnest in offering his watch. Fortunato did not reach out his hand for it, but said with a bitter smile:

"Why do you make fun of me?"

"Good God! I am not making fun of you. Only tell me where Gianetto is and the watch is yours."

Fortunato smiled incredulously, and fixing his black eyes on those of the Adjutant tried to read there the faith he ought to have had in his words.

"May I lose my epaulettes," cried the Adjutant, "if I do not give you the watch on this condition. These comrades are witnesses; I can not deny it."

While speaking he gradually held the watch nearer till it almost touched the child's pale face, which plainly showed the struggle that was going on in his soul between covetousness and respect for hospitality. His breast swelled with emotion; he seemed about to suffocate. Meanwhile the watch was slowly swaying and turning, sometimes brushing against his cheek. Finally, his right hand was gradually stretched toward it; the ends of his fingers touched it; then its whole weight was in his hand, the Adjutant still keeping hold of the chain. The face was light blue; the cases newly burnished. In the sunlight it seemed to be all on fire. The temptation was too great. Fortunato raised his left hand and pointed over his shoulder with his thumb at the hay against which he was reclining. The Adjutant understood him at once. He dropped the end of the chain and Fortunato felt himself the sole possessor of the watch. He sprang up with the agility of a deer and stood ten feet from the pile, which the soldiers began at once to overturn.

There was a movement in the hay, and a bloody man with a poignard in his hand appeared. He tried to rise to his feet, but his stiffened leg would not permit it and he fell. The Adjutant at once grappled with him and took away his stiletto. He was immediately secured, notwithstanding his resistance.

Gianetto, lying on the earth and bound like a fagot, turned his head towards Fortunato, who had approached.

"Son of – !" said he, with more contempt than anger.

The child threw him the silver piece which he had received, feeling that he no longer deserved it; but the outlaw paid no attention to the movement, and with great coolness said to the Adjutant:

"My dear Gamba, I cannot walk; you will be obliged to carry me to the city."

"Just now you could run faster than a buck," answered the cruel captor; "but be at rest. I am so pleased to have you that I would carry you a league on my back without fatigue. Besides, comrade, we are going to make a litter for you with your cloak and some branches, and at the Crespoli farm we shall find horses."

"Good," said the prisoner, "You will also put a little straw on your litter that I may be more comfortable."

While some of the soldiers were occupied in making a kind of stretcher out of some chestnut boughs and the rest were dressing Gianetto's wound, Mateo Falcone and his wife suddenly appeared at a turn in the path that led to the mâquis. The woman was staggering under the weight of an enormous sack of chestnuts, while her husband was sauntering along, carrying one gun in his hands, while another was slung across his shoulders, for it is unworthy of a man to carry other burdens than his arms.

At the sight of the soldiers Mateo's first thought was that they had come to arrest him. But why this thought? Had he then some quarrels with justice? No. He enjoyed a good reputation. He was said to have a particularly good name, but he was a Corsican and a highlander, and there are few Corsican highlanders who, in scrutinizing their memory, can not find some peccadillo, such as a gun-shot, dagger-thrust, or similar trifles. Mateo more than others had a clear conscience; for more than ten years he had not pointed his carbine at a man, but he was always prudent, and put himself into a position to make a good defense if necessary. "Wife," said he to Giuseppa, "put down the sack and hold yourself ready."

She obeyed at once. He gave her the gun that was slung across his shoulders, which would have bothered him, and, cocking the one he held in his hands, advanced slowly towards the house, walking among the trees that bordered the road, ready at the least hostile demonstration, to hide behind the largest, whence he could fire from under cover. His wife followed closely behind, holding his reserve weapon and his cartridge-box. The duty of a good housekeeper, in case of a fight, is to load her husband's carbines.

On the other side the Adjutant was greatly troubled to see Mateo advance in this manner, with cautious steps, his carbine raised, and his finger on the trigger.

"If by chance," thought he, "Mateo should be related to Gianetto, or if he should be his friend and wish to defend him, the contents of his two guns would arrive amongst us as certainly as a letter in the post; and if he should see me, notwithstanding the relationship!"

In this perplexity he took a bold step. It was to advance alone towards Mateo and tell him of the affair while accosting him as an old acquaintance, but the short space that separated him from Mateo seemed terribly long.

"Hello! old comrade," cried he. "How do you do, my good fellow? It is I, Gamba, your cousin."

Without answering a word, Mateo stopped, and in proportion as the other spoke, slowly raised the muzzle of his gun so that it was pointing upward when the Adjutant joined him.

"Good-day, brother," said the Adjutant, holding out his hand. "It is a long time since I have seen you."

"Good-day, brother."

"I stopped while passing, to say good-day to you and to cousin Pepa here. We have had a long journey to-day, but have no reason to complain, for we have captured a famous prize. We have just seized Gianetto Saupiero."

"God be praised!" cried Giuseppa. "He stole a milch goat from us last week."

These words reassured Gamba.

"Poor devil!" said Mateo, "he was hungry."

"The villain fought like a lion," continued the Adjutant, a little mortified. "He killed one of my soldiers, and not content with that, broke Caporal Chardon's arm; but that matters little, he is only a Frenchman.

Then, too, he was so well hidden that the devil couldn't have found him.

Without my little cousin, Fortunato, I should never have discovered him."

"Fortunato!" cried Mateo.

"Fortunato!" repeated Giuseppa.

"Yes, Gianetto was hidden under the hay-pile yonder, but my little cousin showed me the trick. I shall tell his uncle, the Caporal, that he may send him a fine present for his trouble. Both his name and yours will be in the report that I shall send to the Attorney-general."

"Malediction!" said Mateo in a low voice.

They had rejoined the detachment. Gianetto was already lying on the litter ready to set out. When he saw Mateo and Gamba in company he smiled a strange smile, then, turning his head towards the door of the house, he spat on the sill, saying:

"House of a traitor."

Only a man determined to die would dare pronounce the word traitor to Falcone. A good blow with the stiletto, which there would be no need of repeating, would have immediately paid the insult. However, Mateo made no other movement than to place his hand on his forehead like a man who is dazed.

Fortunato had gone into the house when his father arrived, but now he reappeared with a bowl of milk which he handed with downcast eyes to Gianetto.

"Get away from me!" cried the outlaw, in a loud voice. Then, turning to one of the soldiers, he said:

"Comrade, give me a drink."

The soldier placed his gourd in his hands, and the prisoner drank the water handed to him by a man with whom he had just exchanged bullets. He then asked them to tie his hands across his breast instead of behind his back.

"I like," said he, "to lie at my ease."

They hastened to satisfy him; then the Adjutant gave the signal to start, said adieu to Mateo, who did not respond, and descended with rapid steps towards the plain.

Nearly ten minutes elapsed before Mateo spoke. The child looked with restless eyes, now at his mother, now at his father, who was leaning on his gun and gazing at him with an expression of concentrated rage.

"You begin well," said Mateo at last with a calm voice, but frightful to one who knew the man.

"Oh, father!" cried the boy, bursting into tears, and making a forward movement as if to throw himself on his knees. But Mateo cried, "Away from me!"

The little fellow stopped and sobbed, immovable, a few feet from his father.

Giuseppa drew near. She had just discovered the watch-chain, the end of which was hanging out of Fortunato's jacket.

"Who gave you that watch?" demanded she in a severe tone.

"My cousin, the Adjutant."

Falcone seized the watch and smashed it in a thousand pieces against a rock.

"Wife," said he, "is this my child?"

Giuseppa's cheeks turned a brick-red.

"What are you saying, Mateo? Do you know to whom you speak?"

"Very well, this child is the first of his race to commit treason."

Fortunato's sobs and gasps redoubled as Falcone kept his lynx-eyes upon him. Then he struck the earth with his gun-stock, shouldered the weapon, and turned in the direction of the mâquis, calling to Fortunato to follow. The boy obeyed. Giuseppa hastened after Mateo and seized his arm.

"He is your son," said she with a trembling voice, fastening her black eyes on those of her husband to read what was going on in his heart.

"Leave me alone," said Mateo, "I am his father."

Giuseppa embraced her son, and bursting into tears entered the house. She threw herself on her knees before an image of the Virgin and prayed ardently. In the meanwhile Falcone walked some two hundred paces along the path and only stopped when he reached a little ravine which he descended. He tried the earth with the butt-end of his carbine, and found it soft and easy to dig. The place seemed to be convenient for his design.

"Fortunato, go close to that big rock there."

The child did as he was commanded, then he kneeled.

"Say your prayers."

"Oh, father, father, do not kill me!"

"Say your prayers!" repeated Mateo in a terrible voice.

The boy, stammering and sobbing, recited the Pater and the Credo. At the end of each prayer the father loudly answered, "Amen!"

"Are those all the prayers you know?"

"Oh! father, I know the Ave Maria and the litany that my aunt taught me."

"It is very long, but no matter."

The child finished the litany in a scarcely audible tone.

"Are you finished?"

"Oh! my father, have mercy! Pardon me! I will never do so again. I will beg my cousin, the Caporal, to pardon Gianetto."

He was still speaking. Mateo raised his gun, and, taking aim, said:

"May God pardon you!"

The boy made a desperate effort to rise and grasp his father's knees, but there was not time. Mateo fired and Fortunato fell dead.

Without casting a glance on the body, Mateo returned to the house for a spade with which to bury his son. He had gone but a few steps when he met Giuseppa, who, alarmed by the shot, was hastening hither.

"What have you done?" cried she.

"Justice."

"Where is he?"

"In the ravine. I am going to bury him. He died a Christian. I shall have a mass said for him. Have my son-in-law, Tiodoro Bianchi, sent for to come and live with us."

THE MIRROR
BY CATULLE MENDES

There was once a kingdom where mirrors were unknown. They had all been broken and reduced to fragments by order of the queen, and if the tiniest bit of looking-glass had been found in any house, she would not have hesitated to put all the inmates to death with the most frightful tortures.

Now for the secret of this extraordinary caprice. The queen was dreadfully ugly, and she did not wish to be exposed to the risk of meeting her own image; and, knowing herself to be hideous, it was a consolation to know that other women at least could not see that they were pretty.

You may imagine that the young girls of the country were not at all satisfied. What was the use of being beautiful if you could not admire yourself?

They might have used the brooks and lakes for mirrors; but the queen had foreseen that, and had hidden all of them under closely joined flagstones. Water was drawn from wells so deep that it was impossible to see the liquid surface, and shallow basins must be used instead of buckets, because in the latter there might be reflections.

Such a dismal state of affairs, especially for the pretty coquettes, who were no more rare in this country than in others.

The queen had no compassion, being well content that her subjects should suffer as much annoyance from the lack of a mirror as she felt at the sight of one.

However, in a suburb of the city there lived a young girl called Jacinta, who was a little better off than the rest, thanks to her sweetheart, Valentin. For if someone thinks you are beautiful, and loses no chance to tell you so, he is almost as good as a mirror.

"Tell me the truth," she would say; "what is the color of my eyes?"

"They are like dewy forget-me-nots."

"And my skin is not quite black?"

"You know that your forehead is whiter than freshly fallen snow, and your cheeks are like blush roses."

"How about my lips?"

"Cherries are pale beside them."

"And my teeth, if you please?"

"Grains of rice are not as white."

"But my ears, should I be ashamed of them?"

"Yes, if you would be ashamed of two little pink shells among your pretty curls."

And so on endlessly; she delighted, he still more charmed, for his words came from the depth of his heart and she had the pleasure of hearing herself praised, he the delight of seeing her. So their love grew more deep and tender every hour, and the day that he asked her to marry him she blushed certainly, but it was not with anger. But, unluckily, the news of their happiness reached the wicked queen, whose only pleasure was to torment others, and Jacinta more than anyone else, on account of her beauty.

A little while before the marriage Jacinta was walking in the orchard one evening, when an old crone approached, asking for alms, but suddenly jumped back with a shriek as if she had stepped on a toad, crying: "Heavens, what do I see?"

"What is the matter, my good woman? What is it you see? Tell me."

"The ugliest creature I ever beheld."

"Then you are not looking at me," said Jacinta, with innocent vanity.

"Alas! yes, my poor child, it is you. I have been a long time on this earth, but never have I met anyone so hideous as you!"

"What! am I ugly?"

"A hundred times uglier than I can tell you."

"But my eyes – "

"They are a sort of dirty gray; but that would be nothing if you had not such an outrageous squint!"

"My complexion – "

"It looks as if you had rubbed coal-dust on your forehead and cheeks."

"My mouth – "

"It is pale and withered, like a faded flower."

"My teeth – "

"If the beauty of teeth is to be large and yellow, I never saw any so beautiful as yours."

"But, at least, my ears – "

"They are so big, so red, and so misshapen, under your coarse elf-locks, that they are revolting. I am not pretty myself, but I should die of shame if mine were like them." After this last blow, the old witch, having repeated what the queen had taught her, hobbled off, with a harsh croak of laughter, leaving poor Jacinta dissolved in tears, prone on the ground beneath the apple-trees.

* * * * *

Nothing could divert her mind from her grief. "I am ugly – I am ugly," she repeated constantly. It was in vain that Valentin assured and reassured her with the most solemn oaths. "Let me alone; you are lying out of pity. I understand it all now; you never loved me; you are only sorry for me. The beggar woman had no interest in deceiving me. It is only too true – I am ugly. I do not see how you can endure the sight of me."

To undeceive her, he brought people from far and near; every man declared that Jacinta was created to delight the eyes; even the women said as much, though they were less enthusiastic. But the poor child persisted in her conviction that she was a repulsive object, and when Valentin pressed her to name their wedding-day – "I, your wife!" cried she. "Never! I love you too dearly to burden you with a being so hideous as I am." You can fancy the despair of the poor fellow so sincerely in love. He threw himself on his knees; he prayed; he supplicated; she answered still that she was too ugly to marry him.

What was he to do? The only way to give the lie to the old woman and prove the truth to Jacinta was to put a mirror before her. But there was no such thing in the kingdom, and so great was the terror inspired by the queen that no workman dared make one.

"Well, I shall go to Court," said the lover, in despair. "Harsh as our mistress is, she cannot fail to be moved by the tears and the beauty of Jacinta. She will retract, for a few hours at least, this cruel edict which has caused our trouble."

It was not without difficulty that he persuaded the young girl to let him take her to the palace. She did not like to show herself, and asked of what use would be a mirror, only to impress her more deeply with her misfortune; but when he wept, her heart was moved, and she consented, to please him.

* * * * *

"What is all this?" said the wicked queen. "Who are these people? and what do they want?"

"Your Majesty, you have before you the most unfortunate lover on the face of the earth."

"Do you consider that a good reason for coming here to annoy me?"

"Have pity on me."

"What have I to do with your love affairs?"

"If you would permit a mirror – "

The queen rose to her feet, trembling with rage. "Who dares to speak to me of a mirror?" she said, grinding her teeth.

"Do not be angry, your Majesty, I beg of you, and deign to hear me. This young girl whom you see before you, so fresh and pretty, is the victim of a strange delusion. She imagines that she is ugly."

"Well," said the queen, with a malicious grin, "she is right. I never saw a more hideous object."

Jacinta, at these cruel words, thought she would die of mortification. Doubt was no longer possible, she must be ugly. Her eyes closed, she fell on the steps of the throne in a deadly swoon.

But Valentin was affected very differently. He cried out loudly that her Majesty must be mad to tell such a lie. He had no time to say more. The guards seized him, and at a sign from the queen the headsman came forward. He was always beside the throne, for she might need his services at any moment.

"Do your duty," said the queen, pointing out the man who had insulted her. The executioner raised his gleaming axe just as Jacinta came to herself and opened her eyes. Then two shrieks pierced the air. One was a cry of joy, for in the glittering steel Jacinta saw herself, so charmingly pretty – and the other a scream of anguish, as the wicked soul of the queen took flight, unable to bear the sight of her face in the impromptu mirror.

MY NEPHEW JOSEPH
BY LUDOVIC HALEVY

(*Scene passes at Versailles; two old gentlemen are conversing, seated on a bench in the King's garden.*)

Journalism, my dear Monsieur, is the evil of the times. I tell you what, if I had a son, I would hesitate a long while before giving him a literary education. I would have him learn chemistry, mathematics, fencing, cosmography, swimming, drawing, but not composition – no, not composition. Then, at least, he would be prevented from becoming a journalist. It is so easy, so tempting. They take pen and paper and write, it doesn't matter what, apropos to it doesn't matter what, and you have a newspaper article. In order to become a watchmaker, a lawyer, an upholsterer, in short, all the liberal arts, study, application, and a special kind of knowledge are necessary; but nothing like that is required for a journalist."

"You are perfectly right, my dear Monsieur, the profession of journalism should be restricted by examinations, the issuing of warrants, the granting of licenses – "

"And they could pay well for their licenses, these gentlemen. Do you know that journalism is become very profitable? There are some young men in it who, all at once, without a fixed salary, and no capital whatever, make from ten, twenty to thirty thousand francs a year."

"Now, that is strange! But how do they become journalists?"

"Ah! It appears they generally commence by being reporters. Reporters slip in everywhere, in official gatherings, and theatres, never missing a first night, nor a fire, nor a great ball, nor a murder."

"How well acquainted you are with all this!"

"Yes, very well acquainted. Ah! Mon Dieu! You are my friend, you will keep my secret, and if you will not repeat this in Versailles – I will tell you how it is – we have one in the family."

"One what?"

"A reporter."

"A reporter in your family, which always seemed so united! How can that be?"

"One can almost say that the devil was at the bottom of it. You know my nephew Joseph – "

"Little Joseph! Is he a reporter?"

"Yes."

"Little Joseph, I can see him in the park now, rolling a hoop, bare-legged, with a broad white collar, not more than six or seven years ago – and now he writes for newspapers!"

"Yes, newspapers! You know my brother keeps a pharmacy in the Rue Montorgueil, an old and reliable firm, and naturally my brother said to himself, 'After me, my son.' Joseph worked hard at chemistry, followed the course of study, and had already passed an examination. The boy was steady and industrious, and had a taste for the business. On Sundays for recreation he made tinctures, prepared prescriptions, pasted the labels and rolled pills. When, as misfortune would have it, a murder was committed about twenty feet from my brother's pharmacy – "

"The murder of the Rue Montorgueil – that clerk who killed his sweetheart, a little brewery maid?"

"The very same. Joseph was attracted by the cries, saw the murderer arrested, and after the police were gone stayed there in the street, talking and jabbering. The Saturday before, Joseph had a game of billiards with the murderer."

"With the murderer!"

"Oh! accidentally – he knew him by sight, went to the same café, that's all, and they had played at pool together, Joseph and the murderer – a man named Nicot. Joseph told this to the crowd, and you may well imagine how important that made him, when suddenly a little blond man seized him.

'You know the murderer?' 'A little, not much; I played pool with him.' 'And do you know the motive of the crime?' 'It was love, Monsieur, love; Nicot had met a girl, named Eugénie – ' 'You knew the victim, too?' 'Only by sight, she was there in the café the night we played.' 'Very well; but don't tell that to anybody; come, come, quick.' He took possession of Joseph and made him get into a cab, which went rolling off at great speed down the Boulevard des Italiens. Ten minutes after, Joseph found himself in a hall where there was a big table, around which five or six young men were writing. 'Here is a fine sensation,' said the little blond on entering. 'The best kind of a murder! a murder for love, in the Rue Montorgueil, and I have here the murderer's most intimate friend.' 'No, not at all,' cried Joseph, 'I scarcely know him.' 'Be still,' whispered the little blond to Joseph; then he continued, 'Yes, his most intimate friend. They were brought up together, and a quarter of an hour before the crime was committed were playing billiards. The murderer won, he was perfectly calm – ' 'That's not it, it was last Saturday that I played with – ' 'Be still, will you! A quarter of an hour, it is more to the point. Let's go. Come, come.' He took Joseph into a small room where they were alone, and said to him: 'That affair ought to make about a hundred lines – you talk – I'll write – there will be twenty francs for you.' 'Twenty francs!' 'Yes, and here they are in advance; but be quick, to business!' Joseph told all he knew to the gentleman – how an old and retired Colonel, who lived in the house where the murder was committed, was the first to hear the victim's cries; but he was paralyzed in both limbs, this old Colonel, and could only ring for the servant, an old cuirassier, who arrested the assassin. In short, with all the information concerning the game of billiards, Eugénie and the paralytic old Colonel, the man composed his little article, and sent Joseph away with twenty francs. Do you think it ended there?"

"I don't think anything – I am amazed! Little Joseph a reporter!"

"Hardly had Joseph stepped outside, when another man seized him – a tall, dark fellow. 'I've been watching for you,' he said to Joseph. 'You were present when the murder was committed in the Rue Montorgueil!' 'Why, no, I was not present – ' 'That will do. I am well informed, come.' 'Where to?' 'To my newspaper office.' 'What for?' 'To tell me about the murder.' 'But I've already told all I know, there, in that house.' 'Come, you will still remember a few more little incidents – and I will give you twenty francs.' 'Twenty francs!' 'Come, come.' Another hall, another table, more young men writing, and again Joseph was interrogated. He recommenced the history of the old Colonel. 'Is that what you told them down there?' inquired the tall, dark man of Joseph. 'Yes, Monsieur.' 'That needs some revision, then.' And the tall, dark man made up a long story. How this old Colonel had been paralyzed for fourteen years, but on hearing the victim's heartrending screams, received such a shock that all at once, as if by a miracle, had recovered the use of his legs; and it was he who had started out in pursuit of the murderer and had him arrested.

"While dashing this off with one stroke of his pen, the man exclaimed: 'Good! this is perfect! a hundred times better than the other account.' 'Yes,' said Joseph, 'but it is not true.' 'Not true for you, because you are acquainted with the affair; but for our hundred thousand readers, who do not know about it, it will be true enough. They were not there, those hundred thousand readers. What do they want? A striking account – well! they shall have it!' And thereupon he discharged Joseph, who went home with his forty francs, and who naturally did not boast of his escapade. It is only of late that he has acknowledged it. However, from that day Joseph has shown less interest in the pharmacy. He bought a number of penny papers, and shut himself up in his room to write – no one knows what. At last he wore a business-like aspect, which was very funny. About six months ago I went to Paris to collect the dividends on my Northern stock."

"The Northern is doing very well; it went up this week – "

"Oh! it's good stock. Well, I had collected my dividends and had left the Northern Railway Station. It was beautiful weather, so I walked slowly down the Rue Lafayette. (I have a habit of strolling a little in Paris after I have collected my dividends.) When at the corner of the Faubourg Montmartre, whom should I see but my nephew, Joseph, all alone in a victoria, playing the fine gentleman. I saw

very well that he turned his head away, the vagabond! But I overtook the carriage and stopped the driver. 'What are you doing there?' 'A little drive, uncle.' 'Wait, I will go with you,' and in I climbed. 'Hurry up,' said the driver, 'or I'll lose the trail.' 'What trail?' 'Why, the two cabs we are following.' The man drove at a furious rate, and I asked Joseph why he was there in that victoria, following two cabs. 'Mon Dieu, uncle,' he replied, 'there was a foreigner, a Spaniard, who came to our place in the Rue Montorgueil and bought a large amount of drugs, and has not paid us, so I am going after him to find out if he has not given us a wrong address.' 'And that Spaniard is in both the cabs?' 'No, uncle, he is only in one, the first.' 'And who is in the second?' 'I don't know, probably another creditor, like myself, in pursuit of the Spaniard.' 'Well, I am going to stay with you; I have two hours to myself before the train leaves at five o'clock and I adore this sort of thing, riding around Paris in an open carriage. Let's follow the Spaniard!' And then the chase commenced, down the boulevards, across the squares, through the streets, the three drivers cracking their whips and urging their horses on. This man-hunt began to get exciting. It recalled to my mind the romances in the Petit Journal. Finally, in a little street, belonging to the Temple Quarter, the first cab stopped."

"The Spaniard?"

"Yes. A man got out of it – he had a large hat drawn down over his eyes and a big muffler wrapped about his neck. Presently three gentlemen, who had jumped from the second cab, rushed upon that man. I wanted to do the same, but Joseph tried to prevent me. 'Don't stir, uncle!' 'Why not? But they are going to deprive us of the Spaniard!' And I dashed forward. 'Take care, uncle, don't be mixed up in that affair.' But I was already gone. When I arrived they were putting the handcuffs on the Spaniard. I broke through the crowd which had collected, and cried, 'Wait, Messieurs, wait; I also demand a settlement with this man.' They made way for me. 'You know this man?' asked one of the gentlemen from the second cab, a short, stout fellow. 'Perfectly; he is a Spaniard.' 'I a Spaniard!' 'Yes, a Spaniard.' 'Good,' said the short, stout man, 'Here's the witness!' and, addressing himself to one of the men, 'Take Monsieur to the Prefecture immediately.' 'But I have not the time; I live in Versailles; my wife expects me by the five o'clock train, and we have company to dinner, and I must take home a pie. I will come back to-morrow at any hour you wish.' 'No remarks,' said the short, stout man, 'but be off; I am the Police Commissioner.' 'But, Monsieur the Commissioner, I know nothing about it; it is my nephew Joseph who will tell you,' and I called 'Joseph! Joseph!' but no Joseph came."

"He had decamped?"

"With the victoria. They packed me in one of the two cabs with the detective, a charming man and very distinguished. Arriving at the Prefecture, they deposited me in a small apartment filled with vagabonds, criminals, and low, ignorant people. An hour after they came for me in order to bring me up for examination."

"You were brought up for examination?"

"Yes, my dear Monsieur, I was. A policeman conducted me through the Palais de Justice, before the magistrate, a lean man, who asked me my name and address. I replied that I lived in Versailles, and that I had company to dinner; he interrupted me, 'You know the prisoner?' pointing to the man with the muffler, 'Speak up.' But he questioned me so threateningly that I became disconcerted, for I felt that he was passing judgment upon me. Then in my embarrassment the words did not come quickly. I finished, moreover, by telling him that I knew the man without knowing him; then he became furious: 'What's that you say? You know a man without knowing him! At least explain yourself!' I was all of a tremble, and said that I knew he was a Spaniard, but the man replied that he was not a Spaniard. 'Well, well,' said the Judge. 'Denial, always denial; it is your way.' 'I tell you that my name is Rigaud, and that I was born in Josey, in Josas; they are not Spaniards that are born in Josey, in Josas.' 'Always contradiction; very good, very good!' And the Judge addressed himself to me. 'Then this man is a Spaniard?' 'Yes, Monsieur the Judge, so I have been told.' 'Do you know anything more about him?' 'I know he made purchases at my brother's pharmacy in the Rue Montorgueil.' 'At a pharmacy! and he bought, did he not, some chlorate of potash, azotite of potash, and sulphur powder; in a word,

materials to manufacture explosives.' 'I don't know what he bought. I only know that he did not pay, that's all.' 'Parbleau! Anarchists never pay – ' 'I did not need to pay. I never bought chlorate of potash in the Rue Montorgueil,' cried the man; but the Judge exclaimed, louder still, 'Yes, it is your audacious habit of lying, but I will sift this matter to the bottom; sift it, do you understand. And now why is that muffler on in the month of May?' 'I have a cold,' replied the other. 'Haven't I the right to have a cold?' 'That is very suspicious, very suspicious. I am going to send for the druggist in the Rue Montorgueil!'"

"Then they sent for your brother?"

"Yes; I wanted to leave, tried to explain to the Judge that my wife was expecting me in Versailles, that I had already missed the five o'clock train, that I had company to dinner, and must bring home a pie. 'You shall not go,' replied the Judge, 'and cease to annoy me with your dinner and your pie; I will need you for a second examination. The affair is of the gravest sort.' I tried to resist, but they led me away somewhat roughly, and thrust me again into the little apartment with the criminals. After waiting an hour I was brought up for another examination. My brother was there. But we could not exchange two words, for he entered the courtroom by one door and I by another. All this was arranged perfectly. The man with the muffler was again brought out. The Judge addressed my brother. 'Do you recognize the prisoner?' 'No.' 'Ah! you see he does not know me!' 'Be silent!' said the Judge, and he continued talking excitedly: 'You know the man?' 'Certainly not.' 'Think well; you ought to know him.' 'I tell you, no.' 'I tell you, yes, and that he bought some chlorate of potash from you.' 'No!' 'Ah!' cried the Judge, in a passion. 'Take care, weigh well your words; you are treading on dangerous ground.' 'I!' exclaimed my brother. 'Yes, for there is your brother; you recognize him, I think.' 'Yes, I recognize him.' 'That is fortunate. Well, your brother there says that man owes you money for having bought at your establishment – I specify – materials to manufacture explosives.' 'But you did not say that.' 'No, I wish to re-establish the facts.' But that Judge would give no one a chance to speak. 'Don't interrupt me. Who is conducting this examination, you or I?' 'You, Monsieur the Judge?' 'Well, at all events, you said the prisoner owed your brother some money.' 'That I acknowledge.' 'But who told you all this?' asked my brother. 'Your son, Joseph!' 'Joseph!' 'He followed the man for the sake of the money, which he owed you for the drugs.' 'I understand nothing of all this,' said my brother; 'Neither do I,' said the man with the muffler; 'Neither do I,' I repeated in my turn; 'Neither do I any more,' cried the Judge; 'Or rather, yes, there is something that I understand very well; we have captured a gang, all these men understand one another, and side with one another; they are a band of Anarchists!' 'That is putting it too strong,' I protested to the Judge, 'I, a landowner, an Anarchist! Can a man be an Anarchist when he owns a house on the Boulevard de la Reine at Versailles and a cottage at Houlgate, Calvados? These are facts.'"

"That was well answered."

"But this Judge would not listen to anything. He said to my brother, 'Where does your son live?' 'With me in the Rue Montorgueil.' 'Well, he must be sent for; and in the meanwhile, these two brothers are to be placed in separate cells.' Then, losing patience, I cried that this was infamy! But I felt myself seized and dragged through the corridors and locked in a little box four feet square. In there I passed three hours."

"Didn't they find your nephew Joseph?"

"No, it was not that. It was the Judge. He went off to his dinner, and took his time about it! Finally, at midnight, they had another examination. Behold all four of us before the Judge! The man with the muffler, myself, my brother and Joseph. The Judge began, addressing my nephew: 'This man is indeed your father?' 'Yes.' 'This man is indeed your uncle?' 'Yes.' 'And that man is indeed the Spaniard who purchased some chlorate of potash from you?' 'No.' 'What! No?' 'There,' exclaimed the fellow with the muffler. 'You can see now that these men do not know me.' 'Yes, yes,' answered the Judge, not at all disconcerted. 'Denial again! Let's see, young man, did you not say to your uncle – ' 'Yes, Monsieur the Judge, that is true.' 'Ah! the truth! Here is the truth!' exclaimed the Judge, triumphantly. 'Yes, I told my uncle that the man purchased drugs from us, but that is not so.' 'Why isn't

it?' 'Wait, I will tell you. Unknown to my family I am a journalist.' 'Journalist! My son a journalist! Don't believe that, Monsieur the Judge, my son is an apprentice in a pharmacy.' 'Yes, my nephew is an apprentice in a pharmacy,' I echoed. 'These men contradict themselves; this is a gang, decidedly a gang – are you a journalist, young man, or an apprentice in a pharmacy?' 'I am both.' 'That is a lie!' cried my brother, now thoroughly angry. 'And for what newspaper do you write?' 'For no paper at all,' replied my brother, 'I know that, for he is not capable.' 'I do not exactly write, Monsieur the Judge; I procure information; I am a reporter.' 'Reporter! My son a reporter? What's that he says?' 'Will you be still!' cried the Judge. For what newspaper are you a reporter?' Joseph told the name of the paper. 'Well,' resumed the Judge, 'we must send for the chief editor immediately – immediately, he must be awakened and brought here. I will pass the night at court. I've discovered a great conspiracy. Lead these men away and keep them apart.' The Judge beamed, for he already saw himself Court Counsellor. They brought us back, and I assure you I no longer knew where I was. I came and went up and down the staircases and through the corridors. If anyone had asked me at the time if I were an accomplice of Ravachol, I would have answered, 'Probably.'"

"When did all this take place?"

"One o'clock in the morning; and the fourth examination did not take place until two. But, thank Heaven! in five minutes it was all made clear. The editor of the newspaper arrived, and burst into a hearty laugh when he learned of the condition of affairs; and this is what he told the Judge. My nephew had given them the particulars of a murder, and had been recompensed for it, and then the young man had acquired a taste for that occupation, and had come to apply for the situation. They had found him clear-headed, bold, and intelligent, and had sent him to take notes at the executions, at fires, etc., and the morning after the editor had a good idea. 'The detectives were on the lookout for Anarchists, so I sent my reporters on the heels of each detective, and in this way I would be the first to hear of all the arrests. Now, you see, it all explains itself; the detective followed an Anarchist.'"

"And your nephew Joseph followed the detective?"

"Yes, but he dared not tell the truth, so he told me he was one of papa's debtors.' The man with the muffler was triumphant. 'Am I still a Spaniard?' 'No, well and good,' replied the Judge. 'But an Anarchist is another thing.' And in truth he was; but he only held one, that Judge, and was so vexed because he believed he had caught a whole gang, and was obliged to discharge us at four o'clock in the morning. I had to take a carriage to return to Versailles – got one for thirty francs. But found my poor wife in such a state!"

"And your nephew still clings to journalism?"

"Yes, and makes money for nothing but to ride about Paris that way in a cab, and to the country in the railway trains. The newspaper men are satisfied with him."

"What does your brother say to all this?"

"He began by turning him out of doors. But when he knew that some months he made two and three hundred francs, he softened; and then Joseph is as cute as a monkey. You know my brother invented a cough lozenge, 'Dervishes' lozenges'?"

"Yes, you gave me a box of them."

"Ah! so I did. Well, Joseph found means to introduce into the account of a murderer's arrest an advertisement of his father's lozenges." – "How did he do it?"

"He told how the murderer was hidden in a panel, and that he could not be found. But having the influenza, had sneezed, and that had been the means of his capture. And Joseph added that this would not have happened to him had he taken the Dervishes Lozenges. You see that pleased my brother so much that he forgave him. Ah! there is my wife coming to look for me. Not a word of all this! It is not necessary to repeat that there is a reporter in the family, and there is another reason for not telling it. When I want to sell off to the people of Versailles, I go and find Joseph and tell him of my little plan. He arranges everything for me as it should be, puts it in the paper quietly, and they don't know how it comes there!"

A FOREST BETROTHAL BY ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

One day in the month of June, 1845, Master Zacharias' fishing-basket was so full of salmon-trout, about three o'clock in the afternoon, that the good man was loath to take any more; for, as Pathfinder says: "We must leave some for to-morrow!" After having washed his in a stream and carefully covered them with field-sorrel and rowell, to keep them fresh; after having wound up his line and bathed his hands and face; a sense of drowsiness tempted him to take a nap in the heather. The heat was so excessive that he preferred to wait until the shadows lengthened before reclimbing the steep ascent of Bigelberg.

Breaking his crust of bread and wetting his lips with a draught of Rikevir, he climbed down fifteen or twenty steps from the path and stretched himself on the moss-covered ground, under the shade of the pine-trees; his eyelids heavy with sleep.

A thousand animate creatures had lived their long life of an hour, when the judge was wakened by the whistle of a bird, which sounded strange to him. He sat up to look around, and judge his surprise; the so-called bird was a young girl of seventeen or eighteen years of age; fresh, with rosy cheeks and vermilion lips, brown hair, which hung in two long tresses behind her. A short poppy-colored skirt, with a tightly-laced bodice, completed her costume. She was a young peasant, who was rapidly descending the sandy path down the side of Bigelberg, a basket poised on her head, and her arms a little sunburned, but plump, were gracefully resting on her hips.

"Oh, what a charming bird; but she whistles well and her pretty chin, round like a peach, is sweet to look upon."

Mr. Zacharias was all emotion – a rush of hot blood, which made his heart beat, as it did at twenty, coursed through his veins. Blushing, he arose to his feet.

"Good-day, my pretty one!" he said.

The young girl stopped short – opened her big eyes and recognized him (for who did not know the dear old Judge Zacharias in that part of the country?).

"Ah!" she said, with a bright smile, "it is Mr. Zacharias Seiler!"

The old man approached her – he tried to speak – but all he could do was to stammer a few unintelligible words, just like a very young man – his embarrassment was so great that he completely disconcerted the young girl. At last he managed to say:

"Where are you going through the forest at this hour, my dear child?"

She stretched out her hand and showed him, way at the end of the valley, a forester's house.

"I am returning to my father's house, the Corporal Yeri Foerster. You know him, without doubt, Monsieur le Juge."

"What, are you our brave Yeri's daughter? Ah, do I know him? A very worthy man. Then you are little Charlotte of whom he has often spoken to me when he came with his official reports?"

"Yes, Monsieur; I have just come from the town and am returning home."

"That is a very pretty bunch of Alpine berries you have,'" exclaimed the old man.

She detached the bouquet from her belt and tendered it to him.

"If it would please you, Monsieur Seiler."

Zacharias was touched.

"Yes, indeed," he said, "I will accept it, and I will accompany you home. I am anxious to see this brave Foerster again. He must be getting old by now."

"He is about your age, Monsieur le Juge," said Charlotte innocently, "between fifty-five and sixty years of age."

This simple speech recalled the good man to his senses, and as he walked beside her be became pensive.

What was he thinking of? Nobody could tell; but how many times, how many times has it happened that a brave and worthy man, thinking that he had fulfilled all his duties, finds that he has neglected the greatest, the most sacred, the most beautiful of all – that of love. And what it costs him to think of it when it is too late.

Soon Mr. Zacharias and Charlotte came to the turn of the valley where the path spanned a little pond by means of a rustic bridge, and led straight to the corporal's house. They could now see Yeri Foerster, his large felt hat decorated with a twig of heather, his calm eyes, his brown cheeks and grayish hair, seated on the stone bench near his doorway; two beautiful hunting dogs, with reddish-brown coats, lay at his feet, and the high vine arbor behind him rose to the peak of the gable roof.

The shadows on Romelstein were lengthening and the setting sun spread its purple fringe behind the high fir-trees on Alpnach.

The old corporal, whose eyes were as piercing as an eagle's, recognized Monsieur Zacharias and his daughter from afar. He came toward them, lifting his felt hat respectfully.

"Welcome, Monsieur le Juge," he said in the frank and cordial voice of a mountaineer; "what happy circumstance has procured me the honor of a visit?"

"Master Yeri," replied the good man, "I am belated in your mountains. Have you a vacant corner at your table and a bed at the disposition of a friend?"

"Ah!" cried the corporal, "if there were but one bed in the house, should it not be at the service of the best, the most honored of our ex-magistrates of Stantz? Monsieur Seiler, what an honor you confer on Yeri Foerster's humble home."

"Christine, Christine! Monsieur le Juge Zacharias Seiler wishes to sleep under our roof to-night."

Then a little old woman, her face wrinkled like a vine leaf, but still fresh and laughing, her head crowned by a cap with wide black ribbons, appeared on the threshold and disappeared again, murmuring:

"What? Is it possible? Monsieur le Juge!"

"My good people," said Mr. Zacharias, "truly you do me too much honor – I hope – "

"Monsieur le Juge, if you forget the favors you have done to others, they remember them."

Charlotte placed her basket on the table, feeling very proud at having been the means of bringing so distinguished a visitor to the house. She took out the sugar, the coffee and all the little odds and ends of household provisions which she had purchased in the town. And Zacharias, gazing at her pretty profile, felt himself agitated once more, his poor old heart beat more quickly in his bosom and seemed to say to him: "This is love, Zacharias! This is love! This is love!"

To tell you the truth, my dear friends, Mr. Seiler spent the evening with the Head Forester, Yeri Foerster, perfectly oblivious to the fact of Therese's uneasiness, to his promise to return before seven o'clock, to all his old habits of order and submission.

Picture to yourself the large room, the time-browned rafters of the ceiling, the windows opened on the silent valley, the round table in the middle of the room, covered with a white cloth, with red stripes running through it; the light from the lamp, bringing out more clearly the grave faces of Zacharias and Yeri, the rosy, laughing features of Charlotte, and Dame Christine's little cap, with long fluttering streamers. Picture to yourself the soup-tureen, with gayly-flowered bowl, from which arose an appetising odor, the dish of trout garnished with parsley, the plates filled with fruits and little meal cakes as yellow as gold; then worthy Father Zacharias, handing first one and then the other of the plates of fruit and cakes to Charlotte, who lowered her eyes, frightened at the old man's compliments and tender speeches.

Yeri was quite puffed up at his praise, but Dame Christine said: "Ah, Monsieur le Juge! You are too good. You do not know how much trouble this little girl gives us, or how headstrong she is when she wants anything.

You will spoil her with so many compliments."

To which speech Mr. Zacharias made reply:

"Dame Christine, you possess a treasure! Mademoiselle Charlotte merits all the good I have said of her."

Then Master Yeri, raising his glass, cried out: "Let us drink to the health of our good and venerated Judge Zacharias Seiler!"

The toast was drunk with a will.

Just then the clock, in its hoarse voice, struck the hour of eleven. Out of doors there was the great silence of the forest, the grasshopper's last cry, the vague murmur of the river. As the hour sounded, they rose, preparatory to retiring. How fresh and agile he felt! With what ardor, had he dared, would he not have pressed a kiss upon Charlotte's little hand! Oh, but he must not think of that now! Later on, perhaps!

"Come, Master Yeri," he said, "it is bedtime. Good-night, and many thanks for your hospitality."

"At what hour do you wish to rise, Monsieur?" asked Christine.

"Oh!" he replied gazing at Charlotte, "I am an early bird. I do not feel my age, though perhaps you might not think so. I rise at five o'clock."

"Like me, Monsieur Seiler," cried the Head Forester. I rise before daybreak; but I must confess it is tiresome all the same – we are no longer young. Ha! Ha!"

"Bah! I have never had anything ail me, Master Forester; I have never been more vigorous or more nimble."

And suiting his actions to his words, he ran briskly up the steep steps of the staircase. Really Mr. Zacharias was no more than twenty; but his twenty years lasted about twenty minutes, and once nestled in the large canopied bed, with the covers drawn up to his chin and his handkerchief tied around his head, in lieu of a nightcap, he said to himself:

"Sleep Zacharias! Sleep! You have great need of rest; you are very tired."

And the good man slept until nine o'clock. The forester returning from his rounds, uneasy at his non-appearance, went up to his room and wished him good morning. Then seeing the sun high in the heavens, hearing the birds warbling in the foliage, the Judge, ashamed of his boastfulness of the previous night, arose, alleging as an excuse for his prolonged slumbers, the fatigue of fishing and the length of the supper of the evening before.

"Ah, Monsieur Seiler," said the forester, "it is perfectly natural; I would love dearly myself to sleep in the mornings, but I must always be on the go. What I want is a son-in-law, a strong youth to replace me; I would voluntarily give him my gun and my hunting pouch."

Zacharias could not restrain a feeling of great uneasiness at these words. Being dressed, he descended in silence. Christine was waiting with his breakfast; Charlotte had gone to the hay field.

The breakfast was short, and Mr. Seiler having thanked these good people for their hospitality, turned his face toward Stantz; he became pensive, as he thought of the worry to which Mademoiselle Therèse had been subjected; yet he was not able to tear his hopes from his heart, nor the thousand charming illusions, which came to him like a latecomer in a nest of warblers.

By Autumn he had fallen so into the habit of going to the forester's house that he was oftener there than at his own; and the Head Forester, not knowing to what love of fishing to attribute these visits, often found himself embarrassed at being obliged to refuse the multiplicity of presents which the worthy ex-magistrate (he himself being very much at home) begged of him to accept in compensation for his daily hospitality.

Besides, Mr. Seiler wished to share all his occupations, following him in his rounds in the Grinderwald and Entilbach.

Yeri Foerster often shook his head, saying: "I never knew a more honest or better judge than Mr. Zacharias Seiler. When I used to bring my reports to him, formerly, he always praised me, and it is to him that I owe my raise to the rank of Head Forester. But," he added to his wife, "I am afraid the poor man is a little out of his head. Did he not help Charlotte in the hay field, to the infinite enjoyment of the peasants? Truly, Christine, it is not right; but then I dare not say so to him, he is so much above us. Now he wants me to accept a pension – and such a pension – one hundred florins a month. And that silk dress he gave Charlotte on her birthday. Do young girls wear silk dresses in our valley? Is a silk dress the thing for a forester's daughter?"

"Leave him alone," said the wife. "He is contented with a little milk and meal. He likes to be with us; it is a change from his lonesome city life, with no one to talk to but his old governess; whilst here the little one looks after him. He likes to talk to her. Who knows but he may end by adopting her and leave her something in his will?"

The Head Forester, not knowing what to say, shrugged his shoulders; his good judgment told him there was some mystery, but he never dreamed of suspecting the good man's whole folly.

One fine morning a wagon slowly wended its way down the sides of Bigelberg loaded with three casks of old Rikevir wine. Of all the presents that could be given to him this was the most acceptable, for Yeri Foerster loved, above everything else, a good glass of wine.

"That warms one up," he would say, laughing. And when he had tasted this wine he could not help saying:

"Mr. Zacharias is really the best man in the world. Has he not filled my cellar for me? Charlotte, go and gather the prettiest flowers in the garden; cut all the roses and the jasmine, make them into a bouquet, and when he comes you will present them to him yourself. Charlotte! Charlotte! Hurry up, here he comes with his long pole."

At this moment the old man appeared descending the hillside in the shade of the pines with a brisk step.

As far off as Yeri could make himself heard, he called out, his glass in his hand:

"Here is to the best man I know! Here is to our benefactor."

And Zacharias smiled. Dame Christine had already commenced preparations for dinner; a rabbit was turning at the spit and the savory odor of the soup whetted Mr. Seiler's appetite.

The old Judge's eyes brightened when he saw Charlotte in her short poppy-colored skirt, her arms bare to the elbow, running here and there in the garden paths gathering the flowers, and when he saw her approaching him with her huge bouquet, which she humbly presented to him with downcast eyes.

"Monsieur le Juge, will you deign to accept this bouquet from your little friend Charlotte?"

A sudden blush overspread his venerable cheeks, and as she stooped to kiss his hand, he said:

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