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  - (b) [The Nobl' Zwik](#)
  - (c) [What Happened to Holy Saint Pancras of Evolo](#)

# **THE STORY OF A GENIUS**

**FROM THE GERMAN OF  
OSSIP SCHUBIN**

**ENGLISHED BY  
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*The Story of a Genius*

## **The Story of a Genius**

### **I**

Monsieur Alphonse de Sterny will come to Brussels in November and conduct his Oratoria of "Satan."

This short notice in the *Indépendance Belge* created a general sensation. The musicians shrugged, bit their lips, and sneered about the public's injustice toward home talent. The "great world,"--between ourselves the most unmusical "world" in the universe,--very nearly stepped out of its aristocratic apathy. This is something which seldom happens to it in artistic matters, but now, for a whole week it talked nothing but de Sterny: of his octave playing a little, and of his love affairs a great deal. In autumn Brussels has so little to talk about!

Alphonse de Sterny had been in his day a great virtuoso and a social lion. Reigning belles had contended for his favor; George Sand was said to have written a book about him, nobody knew

exactly which one; the fair Princess G--- was supposed to have taken poison on his account. But five years before the appearance of this notice in the *Indépendance Belge*, de Sterny had suddenly withdrawn from the world. During that time he had not given any concerts, nor had he produced any new piano pieces, in his well-known style, paraphrases and fantasies on favorite airs.

Now, for the first in that long interval his name emerged, and in connection with an Oratorio!

De Sterny and an Oratorio!

The world found that a little odd. The artists thought it a great joke.

## II

It is November fifth, the day on which the first rehearsal of "Satan" is to be held, under the composer's own direction.

In the concert hall of the "Grand Harmonic" the performers are already assembled. In honor of the distinguished guest half a dozen more gas jets are burning than is usual at rehearsals, yet the large hall with its dark auditorium and the dim flickering light on its stage, has a desolate, ghostly air. A smell of gas, dust and moist cloth pervades the atmosphere.

A grey rime of congealed mist clings to and trickles down the clothes of the latest arrivals. One sees within the hall how bad the weather must be without. The lusty male chorus, with their pear-shaped Flemish faces, their picturesquely soiled linen, and their luxuriant growth of hair, knock off the clay from their boots and turn down the legs of their trousers. The disheveled female chorus, on whose shoulders the locks are hanging out of curl, complain of indisposition, and exchange cough lozenges. The members of the orchestra work away sulkily on their instruments. Across the dissonance of the thrilling fiddles darts the sharp sound of a string that breaks.

Two dilettanti have slipped in by favor. One is a young piano teacher of German extraction, who raves about the music of the future. The other is an amateur, well known in Brussels by the nickname of "l'ami de Rossini."

The instruments are tuned; here and there a violin practices a scale. The gas jets chirp faintly. The male chorus stamp their feet to keep warm, and rub their red knuckles together. De Sterny is letting himself be waited for.

The friend of Rossini makes up to the lady soloists.

"Madame," he says to the Alto, whose engagement at the "Monnaie" he had helped to bring about, "Madame, I pity you. De Sterny is an exponent of this new music of the future. His compositions are among the most ungrateful tasks ever set the human throat. One only needs to sing them to expiate by penance all one's musical pleasures."

"You are too severe, monsieur," said the Alto. "No one can wonder at the 'friend of Rossini' for hating the music of the future, and I grant that some numbers of this Oratorio are quite astonishingly dull. But with some of the others, monsieur, I predict that you will have to confess yourself in sympathy."

"I, confess myself in sympathy with the music of the future!"

"Well, well," said the Alto, soothingly, "up to a certain point I agree with your aversion, but you must grant all the same that Wagner and Berlioz are composers of genius, and that the music of the future has opened new regions of art."

"What has it opened? A parade ground for pretentious mediocrity! I'll grant this much, that Wagner and Berlioz are ill-doers of genius. But the 'school!' and this new invention they call descriptive music! An insurrection of fiddles screaming over against one another! and they give it names. 'Battle of the Horatii'--'Eruption of Vesuvius'--so that the audience may have something to think about since they can't feel anything, except headache!"

L'ami de Rossini laughed very much at his own joke.

"H'm!-m! and this fine work of de Sterny's," he began again, "I suppose it consists of splendid paraphrases upon poverty of thought."

"The 'Satan' contains pearls which will enchant you," replied the Alto. "But see--here comes de Sterny! I commend the 'Duet of the Outcasts' to your attention."

Followed by the capellmeister and a little group of intimate admirers, Alphonse de Sterny stepped upon the platform. The German pianist started and raised a pair of rapture dilated eyes. De Sterny, who was well accustomed to create that sort of excitement, smiled faintly, threw her an encouraging glance, and nodding to the bowing orchestra took his place before the conductor's desk. Then he let his keen eyes run over the ranks of his musical forces. The violin rows were not even.

"Who is absent?" he asked, pointing to the vacant place.

The violins looked at one another, murmured a name indistinctly, and some one said, "He is excused."

"He is only just out of the hospital," explained the capellmeister, "he often is irregular about rehearsals."

"And you permit that?" asked de Sterny, with his deliberate smile.

"He--he--never spoils anything at the concerts, and I have consideration for him because, because,"--the capellmeister stammered, embarrassed, and stopped short. "But certainly it is an inexcusable irregularity and should be punished," he added.

De Sterny shrugged his shoulders. "Don't disturb yourself," he said, "but next time I hope I shall find my musical forces all together." He rapped on the desk.

His manner of conducting was characteristic. It recalled neither the fiery contortions of Verdi, nor the demoniac energy of Berlioz. His movements at first were quiet, almost weary, his countenance wore an expression of fixed concentration; suddenly his eyes lighted up, his lip quivered, his breast heaved as an exciting climax approached, he raised his arms higher and higher, like wings with which he would wrench himself free from earth; then all at once he collapsed with a look of dejected exhaustion.

"He is killing himself!" sighed the pianist, in a gush of sympathy. But the friend of Rossini said testily:

"He is an incarnate phrase like his own music, and just as full of grimaces!" The introductory figure had confirmed his aversion to de Sterny. "A pretentious fuss!" he muttered grimly, while the pianist with her hand on her heart declared she had "heard the fall of Avalanches!" The figure was repeated and left for future study, and then the Alto laid aside her furs, rose, threw the "friend of Rossini" one glance, drew her mouth into the regulation Oratorio smile, and began.

Upon a somewhat dramatic recitation there followed a meltingly sweet, inexpressibly mournful melody! Yes, really a *melody*! As simple, genuine and tender as a melody of Mozart, but adapted to the requirements of our modern pain craving ears by a few bitter-melancholy modulations. The friend of Rossini could scarcely believe his senses.

And now with every number,--a few bombastic interludes excepted--the beauties of "Satan" increased until at last at the "Duet of the Outcasts," a duet wherein the whole human race seems to weep for its lost heaven, the orchestra rose and broke into enthusiastic applause. De Sterny shed tears, assured them it was the happiest moment of his life, and the execution of the orchestra surpassed all his hopes, the pianiste fell into raptures, and the friend of Rossini growled, while he mechanically moved his hands in applause, "Where did he get that now? A plagiarism--a mass of plagiarism--but from whence?"

The duet was followed by a really hateful finale, which the more experienced among the musicians forgave for the sake of the Oratorio's otherwise uncommon beauties. The musical craft generally put their envy in their pockets, didn't understand, but made their bows as became them before a great mystery.

Next morning, de Sterny, in the coupe of the Countess C--- drove up the steep street Montague de la Cour. He was going to be served with an exquisite breakfast, by gold laced lackeys, and to let himself be buzzed about by mind perverting flatteries uttered in soft aristocratic voices. Suddenly he saw something that interested--that startled him.

Before one of the large red posters which announced the approaching Oratorio performance, stood a broad-shouldered man with worn-out boots, shabby clothes, and a soft felt hat dragged down over his ears.

A crowd of wagons blocked the way, and the coupe was obliged to stop. Again the virtuoso glanced at the shabby man; this time he saw him in profile. Strange! De Sterny turned pale as a corpse and leaned back shuddering in the soft green satin cushions of the carriage. Could it be that he knew the shabby man, or had known him before the brutalizing stamp of drink had disfigured his face?

Who knows? For the matter of that there was enough in the stranger's appearance to draw a

glance and a shudder from any passer-by.

Round shoulders, a loose carriage, a slouching walk, and yet in the whole person and expression of broken-down vigor, and burned-out fire. A handsome face, with somewhat too full red lips, a short nose, powerful brow and eyes, the latter contracting and peering out like those of a wild animal that shuns the light, or like those of a man who will see nothing but the narrow path in which he is condemned to walk, or, perhaps, where he has condemned himself to walk, for life: in the whole countenance the marks of past anguish and present degradation.

Meanwhile the jam has given way, and while C---- cream colors, striking out to regain lost time, bring the great man rapidly up to the countess's palace, the shabby stranger enters one of those butter shops out of which, in the rear, a liquor shop usually opens, and calls for a glass of gin.

### III

Who was he? What was he?

One of those riddles that heaven sends from time to time down to earth to be solved. But the earth occasionally finds the task too difficult and buries the riddle unread in her bosom.

He was born in Brussels, the son of a chorus singer in the theatre "de la Monnaie," and of one of those Hungarian Gipsy musicians, who appear now here now there in the capitals and small towns of Europe, always in bands, like troops of will-o'-the-wisps, carrying on their unwarranted and unjustifiable but bewitching musical nonsense. The mother, Margaretha von Zuylen, she was called, gave the boy the first name of his Hungarian father, who had disappeared before the child saw the light. The Flemish woman's son was named Gesa, Gesa von Zuylen. He had a dark-eyed face, framed by black curls; at the same time he was somewhat rounded in feature, and heavily built, indicating that he was a son of his flat, canal-intersected fatherland. His temperament was a strange mixture of dreamy inertness and fitful fire. The alley in which he grew up was called the Rue Ravestein, and stretched itself crooked and uneven, dirty and neglected, behind the Rue Montagne de la Cour, out toward St. Gudule. The nooks and corners of that region, albeit close to the brilliant centre of urban civilization, have an ill name, are picturesquely disreputable, and quite unrecognized by the good society of Brussels. No carriage can pass here, partly because the alleys are too narrow, partly because their original unevenness--no country in the world has a more hilly capital than flat Belgium--is increased here and there by a few rickety steps. Consequently nearly all the inhabitants extend their domestic establishments into the open air.

The active life and the dirt remind one of southern cities. Decaying vegetables, squirrel skins, paper flowers, old ball gloves, ashes, and other trash make themselves comfortable on the large irregular stones of the pavement, and through the middle slowly creep the dull and stagnant waters of the drain. Long-legged hyena-like dogs, with crooked backs and rough hides, that remind the visitor of Constantinople, belonging to nobody, snuff amongst the refuse; scissors-grinders, and other roofless vagabonds, lie, according to the time of year, in the shade or the sunshine; untidy women in dirty wrappers, with slovenly hair caught up on pins, lean out of windows and carry on endless conversations; others stand in the house doors, a puffy red fist on either hip, and look forth, blinking at time creeping by.

The houses are not alike, some are narrow and tall, some broad and low, as if crowded into the ground by their monstrous red-green roofs. In a few windows are flower pots, others are closely curtained. Small, not particularly tempting drinking shops, with dark red woodwork, on which is written in white letters, "Hier verkoopt men drank," frequently break the rows of dwellings. Any one of these alleys, in Gesa's youth, might have passed for all the rest, only the Rue Ravestein perhaps was still more disreputably picturesque than the others. With the lazy hum of its vagabond life there mingled the sound of the coffin maker's hammer and the sharp stroke of the stone mason's chisel. Against the rear wall of an ancient grey church there leaned an enormous crucifix, and from beneath the time-blackened halo around his head, the Redeemer looked sadly down on the shame and misery that he had not been able to banish from the world. Two narrow church windows mirrored themselves in the waters of the drain, that is, on days when the drain was clear enough.

In these surroundings Gesa grew up. His mother belonged among those females who stood in the house doors and blinked at time creeping by. She was a type of a handsome Fleming, tall, somewhat heavy, with powerful limbs and a red and white complexion. Her red lips parted indolently over very white teeth, a delicate pink played about her nostrils. She had the prominent eyes and the richly waving, luxuriant, tawny hair with which Rubens liked to adorn his

Magdalens. When she was not engaged at the theatre, or standing in the house door, she was lounging on her straw bed in the gaunt room, reading robber stories out of old journals, that were bought from an antiquary in a rag shop near by, and circulated from hand to hand among the gossips of the Rue Ravestein.

Lazy to sleepiness, good-humored to weakness, she had ever a caress for Gesa, and a merry frolic for the big grey cat. She lived only in the moment. In the beginning of the month, she fed the boy with dainties, toward the end she ran in debt.

From his earliest youth Gesa was musical. Before he could speak, he would look up with great dark eyes to his mother, enchanted when she rocked him in her arms and sang a cradle song.

A friend of Margaretha taught the little one to play on the violin. Gesa learned extraordinarily fast. The chorus singer's financial condition growing constantly more and more unfortunate, led her to make use of her son's talent, and she actually procured him an engagement, when he was hardly nine years old, in the band of a circus that had erected its temporary booths on the "Grand Sablon," and whose company consisted of an acrobat of conspicuous beauty, a particularly unpleasant dwarf named Molaro, four monkeys and a pony, the height of whose accomplishments it was to stand on three legs, though that might have been due to infirmity rather than art.

Gesa's orchestral duties consisted in supporting, along with an old flutist, the musical disorders of a narrow-chested, long-haired youth, who hammered waltzes and polkas on a tired old spinnet, while at the same time, as he confessed to little Gesa with a sigh, he had vainly longed all his life to be entrusted with the execution of a funeral march!

The circus gave its performances from two to four in the afternoon, and was always empty. While Gesa, behind the orchestra rails, fiddled his simple part mechanically, his childish eyes peered out into the ring beyond. There he saw the acrobat, bedizened in paint and tinsel, with pink tights and green silk hose, a gold circlet on his head, throwing somersaults in the air, and contorting his limber body on a trapeze. He saw the dwarf, with his big red bristly head, and his tights, yellow on one side and blue on the other, making disgusting jokes. The dwarf was always applauded. The little monkeys tremblingly played their bits of tricks. The smell of sawdust, gas, orange peel and monkeys crept into the little fiddler's nostrils, he sneezed. Then he grew sleepy, and his bow stopped. "Allons donc!" wheezed the pianist, stamping his foot. Gesa opened his eyes, and met those of his mother, who sat blonde and phlegmatic at the edge of the ring. She smiled and nodded to him; he fiddled on. When the chorus singer was not hindered by rehearsals at the theatre, she never omitted a performance of the circus. Gesa imagined she came to hear him play.

But one fine day Gesa was rude to the dwarf Molaro, and paid for it with his place in the orchestra. Margaretha, however, still continued a regular visitor at the circus.

And then there came an April afternoon with cold showers of rain and violent blustering wind. Winter and spring waged war without. Gesa, who since he had ceased to have a regular occupation, read incessantly in the knight and robber romances of his mother, sat bent over the faded and tattered leaves of an old journal, completely lost in a tale of terror, both elbows planted on the shaky table and a finger in each ear. Margaretha entered, and came up to him.

"Your supper stands already prepared in the cupboard," she said, stammering and hesitating. "You--you need not wait for me. I shall come home late. Adieu, my treasure!"

"Adieu, mama," said he, indifferently. He was used to her coming home late and scarcely looked up from his reading. She went. Five minutes later she returned.

"Have you forgotten something, mother?" he asked.

"Yes," muttered his mother. She was flushed, and searched about aimlessly, now here, now there. At last she came and bent over the boy, kissed him once, twice, thrice, pressing his head to her breast. "God guard thee," she murmured, and went away. Gesa read on. Presently, he was obliged to brush away something bright that obscured the already indistinct print of the journal. It was a tear of his mother.

Gesa lay down that night as usual, when Margaretha was engaged at the theatre, without fastening the door. When he awoke next morning, he found his mother's bed empty. Frightened he cried "Mother! mother!" He knew she could not hear him; he cried out to relieve the oppression at his heart. Slipping into his clothes he ran down into the street. The gutter, brimming full from the melted snow, quivered in the morning wind. Slanting red sunbeams shimmered in the church windows. A few melancholy organ tones sounded through the grey walls out into the empty street. Gesa wept bitterly. "Mother!" he cried, louder and more pitifully than ever--"Mother!" She had always been kind to him.

He looked up and down. The whole world had grown empty for him. He understood that his mother had deserted him. The children in the Rue Ravestein understand so quickly! A long thin hand was laid on his shoulder. He looked up, beside him stood a gentleman whom he knew. The gentleman lived on the first floor of the house where Margaretha's garret was. He was pale as the Christ on the great Crucifix, and looked down almost as sadly. "Poor fellow!" he murmured, "she has left thee?" Gesa bit his teeth into his under lip, turned very red and shook off the

stranger's hand. He felt for the first time that pity can humiliate. The strange gentleman, however, stroked him very softly on the head, and said once more, "Poor fellow! You must not blame her. Love is like that!"

"What is love?" asked Gesa, looking at him steadily.

The stranger cleared his throat. "A sickness, a fever," said he, hastily, "a fever in which one dreams beautiful things--and does hateful ones."

## IV

M. Gaston Delileo was the stranger's name, but in the Rue Ravestein they never called him anything but "the sad gentleman,"--the "droevige Herr." He might have been between forty and fifty years old, had a yellow face that reminded one of a carving in old ivory, wore a full beard, and long straight black hair parted in the middle of his forehead. Except in the hottest summer weather he never went on the street otherwise than wrapped in an old dark blue, red-lined Carbonari cloak.

About seven months before, he had moved into the Rue Ravestein, stroked the children's heads, greeted the women in passing, was generally liked and associated with no one.

Before Margaretha's flight she had secretly placed a letter in the otherwise empty letter-box before his door, begging that he would adopt the boy, thereby showing some shrewd knowledge of character in trusting to his benevolence. His wife was dead: his only child, a little daughter, at that time hardly seven years old, was being brought up by relatives in France, as his bachelor housekeeping would have made it difficult for him to give the child proper care. Thus widowed and solitary, afflicted moreover with a great heart that needed love, and had never all his life long been satisfied, he took the boy to himself without any overnice reasoning upon the subject.

"Come to breakfast," he said quite simply, took the orphan by the hand and led him into his own dwelling.

When the meal was over, and while M. Delileo, with that rage for systematizing which often distinguishes especially unpractical people, was bending over his writing table, making out a plan of education, a division of hours, and finally a long list of things which Gesa might possibly need within the next ten years, the boy slipped curiously around in the little room, and examined its arrangement. The furniture was a decayed mixture of stiff, military Empire, and pretentious, crooked Louis-Philippe. On the walls hung a few sketches by once celebrated masters, with dedications "à mon chère ami, etc.," a few poet's autographs in little black frames, and besides these the rapidly executed portrait of a very beautiful woman, in a white satin dress with a great many strings of pearls around her neck, and a little crown on her head. "Is that the queen?" asked Gesa of his new protector.

Whereupon the "droevige Herr," rising up from his occupation, answered, not without a certain solemnity, "That, my child, that was the Gualtieri!"

"Ah!" said Gesa, and was exactly as wise as before. How indeed was he to know that the Gualtieri in her time had been one of the most famous, and alas! one of the most infamous artistes in the world?

"She was a queen too,--a queen of song," added Delileo after a pause.

"And did you know her?" asked Gesa, still absorbed in staring at the romantically costumed lady.

"She was my wife," answered Delileo with emphasis, and an eloquent gesture.

"Ah! then she must have loved you very much," observed Gesa, seriously, wishing to say something pleasant. But Delileo shrank and turned away his head.

Beneath this portrait, day after day, on a shabby black marble-top table, stood fresh flowers in a crumbling blue delft pitcher.

## V

Immediately upon the beginning of their life together, Delileo made a correct estimate of his protégé's musical gifts, and thanks to some artist connections that still remained to him, he procured instruction for Gesa from one of the most famous violinists at that time established in the Brussels Conservatory. He cared for the rest of Gesa's education himself. A curious education, truly! "Correct spelling and an extensive knowledge of literature," he would assert, "are two absolute necessities of a gentleman's culture, further than that he needs nothing." Gesa's orthography, in spite of his instructor's praiseworthy efforts, remained somewhat uncertain, his knowledge of literature on the contrary made astonishing progress, and soon reached from the "Essais de Montaigne," Delileo's first hobby, to Delileo's own romance--his second hobby.

This romance, which was called "The Twilight of the Gods," and had been waiting ten years in vain for a publisher, formed a striking counterpart to Delileo's Carbonari cloak. Like that romantic article of apparel it smelled of mould, and the breath of superannuated philanthropic theories hovered about it. It began with a legend and ended with an ode. Many an evening the elder spent in reading this nondescript production to his protégé, Gesa always attending with the devout fervor which believing natures bring to mysteries they do not understand.

An odd couple they made, the broken man with his nervous restlessness, the restlessness of one who has accomplished nothing, and who sees the grave before him--and the vigorous young fellow, with his healthy laziness, the self-confident laziness of one who feels a great talent within him and to whom life seems as if it could never end. The weary spirit of one strayed constantly back, from the hopeless insipidity of his present, to an Utopia of the year thirty: the other's imagination, meanwhile, crippled by no sort of experience, galloped confidently out into the future, behind a double team of fresh young chimeras! Enthusiasts were they both,--Delileo the more unpractical of the two.

Poor Gaston Delileo! He belonged in the category of universal geniuses; for which reason he had brought his genius to the attainment of absolutely nothing in the universe! Music, painting, literature, political economy,--he had pursued them all, one after the other or simultaneously, just as it happened, and all with the greatest zeal. He had believed with devout idealism in the capacity of society for improvement. He had adopted the theories of St. Simon, and had worn with enthusiasm the vest laced up behind of that brotherhood, and a headband on which his name was embroidered. History relates that the St. Simonian Brotherhood, with their practical division of labor, limited his activity in the beginning to the contribution of money and the brushing of boots! Later they enrolled him the memorable "Three hundred," who set forth to seek the mother of the sect in foreign lands, after Madame de Stael had declined that post of honor.

His money was gone, his illusion had changed to disgust. He had withdrawn in melancholy from the world, seeking to hide himself and his disappointment. He wished nothing but to forget and be forgotten:--that is in the present; from the future, a far-off, misty future, he still hoped something--for his romance. Meanwhile he supported existence by copying notes,--like Rousseau. Two, three years passed by, Gesa became as handsome as a youth in a picture. At Delileo's side he could not fail to gain cultivation of mind and heart, but associated with the eccentric St. Simonian he remained a stranger to all discipline of character. More and more there was revealed a want of concentration, and a vague dreaminess in his nature which to a practiced observer, would have boded no good for his future. He could never maintain a medium between relaxed indolence and exhausting ardor: in tough, persistent capacity for work he failed altogether, and whatever did not come to him by inspiration, he acquired with greater difficulty than did the most commonplace pupil of the conservatory.

Upon all this, however, his violin-professor made no reflections. Gesa not only played his instrument with a skill unheard of for his years, but he also improvised with wonderful originality, at least, so said the professor--who marked nothing but the gigantic strides of the boy's progress, was proud of his pupil and presented him to one amateur after another.

The phlegmatic Brusselers were enchanted by his musical extravagances, because he was named Gesa, had a handsome brunette face, and was said to have sprung from Hungarian origin. Their enthusiasm at his performance always culminated in the same words--"how gipsy-like! *Comme c'est tsigane!*"

At last came a day when Gesa was to play for the first time at a public concert. With the colossal conceit of youth, he rejoiced at the thought of his debut. The apprehensive Gaston Delileo on the contrary, lost appetite and sleep.

Anxiously anticipating a disappointment for the boy, he spent most of his time in exhorting Gesa not to care much for a fiasco; an exhortation which the young musician took very impatiently, and ran away from it. With his hat dragged down self-assertingly over his ears, he



stamped fuming up and down the Rue Ravestein, while the sad elder crept back and forth in his chamber above, and foreboded.

On the concert evening, Delileo could not be moved to enter the music hall. Breathless and panting, he stood before the performer's entrance, and held his fingers in his ears. Suddenly, in spite of his efforts to exclude every sound, he heard a strange tumult. He let his hands fall. Was it a fire alarm? No, it was clapping from hundreds of hands and shouting from hundreds of throats. The next moment he had burst sobbing into the green-room, and held his nurseling in his arms.

All the other performers pressed the young fellow's hands, praised him, and promised him a brilliant future. With that naïve arrogance which one so easily pardons in young gods, even while it provokes a pitying smile, he received all these compliments as if they were his proper tribute; but even his unabashed self-possession gave way when the door opened and an elegant young man entered holding out both hands--Alphonse de Sterny.

"My dear young friend," he cried, "I could not let the evening pass without knowing you--without congratulating you." Then the young violinist's head sank, he trembled from head to foot, and his hands grew ice cold in those of the great virtuoso.

## VI

Alphonse de Sterny! The name in those days exercised an enchantment that was mingled with awe upon the ears of every one, be he artist or amateur, who cared for music. In our coldly critical times we can form no idea of the insane idolatry that was addressed, during the decade of the fifties to one or two piano virtuosos. De Sterny was among the most famous of these. The Sterny craze appeared like an epidemic in every town where he gave his concerts. At the same time the riddle of his power was hard to solve. His envious contemporaries asserted bluntly that he owed his triumphs not so much to the artistic excellence of his playing as to his agreeable person and gracious manners. He was the perfection of a *homme à succès*. Gloved and cravated with just precision enough for elegance, sufficiently careless to appear distinguished, ready and malicious enough to pass for witty, dissipated and extravagant enough to be credited with genius, he was also very handsome, wore his hair parted low in the middle of his forehead, and always dressed with quiet correctness in the latest fashion but one, as became a person of the best gentility, avoiding all artist eccentricities. His conversation was amusing, his manners unimpeachable. He was the natural son of a French diplomat, called himself de Sterny after his birthplace, and had inherited an income of twenty-five thousand francs, as the world knew; from an Italian princess--as the world did not know. His piano playing was beautifully finished, a shower of pearls, a chain of flowers, with a masterly balanced technique, carried out in a dignified execution, never one false note, never any vulgar pounding.

Certainly the great Hungarian pianist, to whose performance a handful of false notes belonged as part of the effect, was wont to remark bitingly that "de Sterny played like a countess." But de Sterny, to whom the speech was brought by kind friends, only smiled amiably, and continued, at least in the beginning of his career, to delicately caress an instrument which the other pianists maltreated, and electrified a public satiated with musical orgies, by his moderation. He moved almost exclusively in the best social circles, yet he always showed himself ready to do a service for a fellow artist.

Altogether he was, when Gesa first became acquainted with him, a perfectly shallow, perfectly selfish, uncommonly talented, very good-humored, very vain man who loved to hear himself talked about. Charlatan he only became later, in order to maintain himself upon the pedestal whither public adulation had driven him. The pedestal was too high! Many another might have found himself growing dizzy up there.

He loved to patronize, and for that reason did not content himself with pressing Gesa's hands, but gave him his address, and invited him to call upon him next morning at the Hotel de Flandres, "so that we can talk over your future," said he, cheerily. Then he was very amiable to the other artists assembled in the green-room, then he held out his hand to Delileo, over whose cheeks the tears were running down, then he clapped the debutant on the shoulder, wished him "good luck!" and disappeared.

At the little artist supper, which the manager had arranged for the performers, Gesa sat, ate not a mouthful, and spoke not a word. With pale cheeks and fixed eyes he gazed before him into the future,--a future in which the trees bore golden leaves, and their fruit sparkled like diamonds--a future in which dust and mold were unknown things, where forms of radiant beauty wandered among thickets of thornless roses, and the laurel trees bowed before him.

In those days Gesa von Zuylen's eyes were not contracted like the eyes of a wild beast that shuns the light; they were wide open, like a young eagle's whom the sun itself does not blind.

## VII

No one could take up a gifted but obscure beginner more cordially than did the great de Sterny the little Von Zuylen. He invited the boy to breakfast, two, three times in succession, and Gesa became a familiar part of the furniture, perhaps rather a favorite ornament in the virtuoso's elegant hotel apartments. He was always obliged to bring his violin, and to improvise for de Sterny, who accompanied him on the piano, with the ready skill in following another's feeling, which was his peculiar gift. Then he would draw Gesa into conversation and laugh immoderately at the boy's original notions. Soon he could not meet an acquaintance without crying out to him, "Have you seen my little Gipsy? I must make you acquainted with my Gipsy. He improvises like Chopin, only quite otherwise. Yesterday he quoted Shakespeare to me, and to-day he discovered that Marsala is not so good as Tokay. And he is handsome,--'à croquer.'"

In Brussels society the rumor of an "Eighth Wonder of the World" began to spread, and at last the Princess L---- arranged a musical soirée for his benefit, on which occasion truly the "eighth wonder" came very near losing his prestige altogether. De Sterny took charge with amiable pedantry, of all the details of his protégé's appearance, had him measured for a pair of patent leather shoes, and on the eventful evening tied the boy's white cravat with his own hands, and brought him in his own carriage to the L---- palace. But already in the brilliant vestibule, adorned with old weapons, and two mysterious black suits of armor, Gesa's robust self-conceit vanished completely. He who had faced the public at a concert with a lion's courage now clung with almost childish anxiety to de Sterny.

"Have you brought the 'eighth wonder'?" cried the princess to de Sterny, as he entered. She was a blonde lady, uncommonly good-natured, very lively, and very short-sighted, for which reason she always held her glass to her eyes. "Have you brought the 'eighth wonder'?" cried she, in a tone as if that were something comic.

"Of course--here it is,--it is named Gesa von Zuylen--Gesa von Zuylen, *c'est droll*--is it not, princess? May I beg that you will deal a little carefully with my 'eighth wonder'--it is a little sensitive!"

"So--really! That is charming. I am glad when a young artist displays a certain pride, it is always becoming. What eyes he has,--staring at Gesa through her glass--"my husband told me about his eyes. A real true gipsy.--They say he quoted Shakespeare of late--I laughed so at that!"--Then, as other guests entered, "pray, endeavor to make the 'eighth wonder' comfortable, de Sterny, you are entirely at home here." This was the princess's manner of dealing carefully with a sensitive "eighth wonder."

De Sterny placed the boy temporarily in a corner, out of which he soon drew him forth to be presented to several ladies and gentlemen. Gesa assumed a haughty bearing. The ladies especially were very friendly, and very patronizing, only it scarcely occurred to one of them to address a word to the boy himself. They all talked about him, in his presence, as if he were a picture, or as if he could not understand French. They wondered, and praised and then forgot him while he stood before them, and talked among themselves of other things. It grew more and more uncomfortable for him, and as his embarrassment increased he felt as if he were walking painfully upon smooth thin ice. He shivered a little. Everything around him was so bright and cold. The soft, fine, flute-like voices of good society hurt him. Light and stinging as snowflakes, their words flew against his burning cheeks. He would have liked to weep. He was an "eighth world-wonder"--they stared at him through a lorgnette, discussed him,--and cared for him no further. Listening he heard the words "comes from the Rue Ravestein."--"What is that, the Rue Ravestein?" "What is it? That is difficult to explain to a lady,--"*vraiment?*" "But he gives a perfectly amazing impression of good breeding." "*Il n'a pas du tout e' air peuple!*" "But since he is a gipsy,--Gesa felt his throat tighten.

"Shall we not hear you to-day?" asked the ladies who crowded around de Sterny.

"Me?" he replied, with a laugh, "me? I am only manager to-day--and besides I suffer horribly from stage fright."

The moment had come! Gesa must play: his heart beat to suffocation. It was not he, but a stolid clod stiffened with bashfulness who stood up and laid his fingers on the strings. In the middle of Mendelssohn's G minor Concerto he stuck fast, stumbled over himself, picked up, and

scrambled painfully through to the end. The composition was never worse played. De Sterny was beside himself. Gesa would have liked to sink through the floor.

A few people applauded because they did not know any better, and a few others because they had not been listening at all. But the greater part shrugged their shoulders, and said "de Sterny is an enthusiast."

And when the virtuoso tried to say a word in excuse for his protégé and declared he had never heard him play so ill, they answered "Bah! we don't blame you for anything, de Sterny. We know you are an enthusiast."

The company chatted and laughed, and nibbled a little refreshment in their careless fashion. Then came a deputation of the handsomest women and begged de Sterny to play, whereupon he seated himself at the piano with his usual good-humored readiness, and smiling consciousness of success. After he had played he went to Gesa and said:

"My dear boy, collect yourself! Could you not forget that any one heard you but me, and improvise something? Try to remember the theme you last played to me. Your future depends upon it. And I would so like to be proud of you!"

These last words worked a miracle.

"I will play--only--only--that I may not shame you!" murmured Gesa.

The boy was deathly pale, and trembled all over as he raised his violin, his eyes lighted up--and then hid themselves behind their dark lashes.

A rain of fire fell before his vision, a whirl of emotion filled his breast, wild passionate melodies sounded in his ears. Had he dreamed them, or had a complaining autumn storm driven them hither from the land of his father? Were they echoes of the songs his mother had listened to from her lover, and later had hushed her child to sleep with them, as she rocked him on the threshold of the house in the shabby little street, where the sad Saviour looked hopelessly down from the Crucifix on the grey church wall? Who knows! His violin sang and sobbed as only a Hungarian gipsy-violin can; harsh modulations, piercing melodies, a mad tempest of passion,--then one last burst of wild, reckless hilarity--and he broke off, breathless, and gazing fixedly before him. He knew he had done his best. His ears listened greedily. If they expected a storm of applause as at his public debut, they were disappointed. Only a little hum, like the dry leaves that an east wind is rustling, buzzed through the room, and as if afar off he heard the words "*Charmant, magnifique, original, tzigane*"--His head sank, a black cloud floated before his eyes. De Sterny came up and clapped him on the shoulder. "Bravo! Bravo!" he cried, "we are rehabilitated!" and turning to the company with a triumphant smile,

"Now did I exaggerate?"

But Gesa listened no longer for the answer of the salon. He pressed de Sterny's hand to his hot lips, and burst into tears. The virtuoso was his heaven, his God. "Mais voyons! grand enfant!" said his patron soothingly. And the "world" was enchanted, even more of course by the generosity of the great pianist than by the talent of his protégé!

\* \* \* \* \*

"What is a chimera?" asked the little Gipsy of his great friend one day.

It was in the forenoon. Gesa had been turning over the leaves of a French book which he did not understand, "*Les Fleurs du Mal*," by Baudelaire. De Sterny meanwhile had been writing letters. He wore a yellow dressing gown of Japanese silk, in which he looked like a large mullein. He yawned and stretched himself, looked pale and used up. That he had not slept regularly for fifteen years was very evident from his appearance.

"What is a chimera?" asked Gesa.

"A chimera--a chimera--it is a siren with wings," defined the virtuoso, turning round.

"H'm!" Gesa lowered his eyes thoughtfully, then raised them inquiringly. "An ennobled siren then?"

"Yes,--as one takes it."

De Sterny sat down by the chimney to warm his feet. "Deuced cold!--hand me the chartreuse, so--Yes, a refined siren if you like," he continued. "The siren has soft human arms with which she draws us into destructive pleasures, the chimera has claws with which she tears our heart. The siren entices us into the mire, the chimera lures us toward heaven,--only we don't reach the heaven, and we often find ourselves very well off in the mire,--deucedly well off! But *saperment!* you don't understand that yet." And he pulled Gesa's ear.

The boy looked rather confused: he certainly had not understood a word of his patron's tirade. "But some of us reach heaven, the heaven of Art, the Walhalla, the Pantheon," cried he, eagerly, with the bombast of a very young person who has read more than he has understood, and likes to display his little knowledge--"If only one sets out early enough on the way."

"Oh yes, a few!" murmured the virtuoso with a queer smile.

"Michael Angelo, Raphael, Beethoven," cried the boy.

"Shakespeare, Milton, Mozart, Leonardo da Vinci," de Sterny laughed aloud as he continued the litany. "But I assure you a man must have quite astounding powers to reach that heaven, and lungs constructed expressly for the purpose in order to feel comfortable after he gets there." The pianist yawned slightly. He belonged among those who amuse themselves with the sirens without permitting them to acquire too much power, and who avoid chimeras on principle. But Gesa was not yet satisfied.

"Have all chimeras wings?" he asked, thoughtfully.

"God forbid!" cried de Sterny.

"But"--

"My dear," cried his patron, laughingly, "if you have any more questions to ask, say so, and I will ring for the waiter to bring up an encyclopædia--I am at the end of my Latin!"

## VIII

Eleven years later, in the middle of May, Gesa came back to Brussels after a long absence. Alphonse de Sterny had known how to make practical use of the enthusiasm in Brussels society. Gesa had been sent on a government pension and supported, moreover, by the favor of several eminent persons, to study under one of the most famous violinists of the time, then settled in Paris.

He had studied a little, dissipated a great deal, then studied again; had been much admired, much envied; had learned to empty his champagne glass, and to distinguish in women between a coquette and one who will repel an impertinence. He had made his first professional tour, with a famous Italian staccato singer, and a still more famous Moravian impressario, had earned many laurels, had finally quarreled at Nice with the violincellist of the troupe on the singer's account, had challenged the cellist, and insulted the manager. The latter was a reasonable being, however, who did not stand on trifles of that sort, and two months later in Paris, when he was engaging a company for his American tour he made Gesa a brilliant offer. But the young violinist was rich in the possession of a few thousand francs that remained to him from his last enterprise, and he curtly declined the great Marinsky's proposal, saying "the career of a soloist bored him, he wished to devote himself to composition." He was twenty-four years old. At that age many musicians have produced their greatest works. He had published nothing as yet, except a "Reverie" that appeared nearly seven years before, with a handsome vignette of the young composer on the title page, in all the pomp of a dilettante production, was bought by the whole Faubourg St. Germaine, and by hardly any one else. Since that time he had scribbled a great deal, but had finished nothing,--and yet he felt so rich! He had only not willed it as yet. He needed quiet for composing. But quiet in Paris is an article of luxury that none but very great gentlemen can compel. Brussels rose in his memory, Brussels with her Gothic churches and crooked streets, her zealous Catholicism, her luxuriant vegetation and stagnant life. A sort of homesickness overcame him,--he started for Brussels.

It was the middle of May; May is beautiful in Brussels. No long war, only gay skirmishes between sun and rain clear the air. Undulating golden vapors weave a dreamy halo, like the atmosphere of old legends, over the perspective of ancient streets that lose themselves in the far distance; they shimmer like luminous shadows around the Gothic lace work of St. Gudule, and spread their blonde veil over the green pomp of the park. There is something quite mysterious in this hazy light, this mist of dissolved sunbeams, this metallic vibrating and shimmering that illumines sober, grey old Brussels in the springtime, like a saint's nimbus. The statues in the park have lost their winter cowls of straw; through the trees, whose feathery foliage gives out a pleasant pungent spring odor, glide the sunbeams, outline the edge of a gnarled black bough with a streak of silver, paint broad spots of light on a mighty bole, slip gaily into the moist grass and play hide-and-seek among the transparent leaf-shadows. Around the house of the Prince of Orange luxuriant blooming lilac bushes toss their white and pale purple plumes; before the

Koenigsgarten dreamily waves a sea of violet rhododendrons; and heavy with fragrance, warmly enervating, a scarcely perceptible breath of wind stirs the air, the Sirocco of the North.

Gesa went with vigorous strides from the Gare du Midi, across the Boulevard, to the Rue Ravestein. Everything interested him, everything seemed like home. He stood still, looked about him, smiled, went a little further, and again stood still, in his foolish absent fashion. Now he turned off from the Montagne de la Cour--before his eyes stretched the Rue Ravestein. A strange nameless feeling overcame him, a feeling of agitation and anxiety. He could have turned and fled, yet he drew nearer and nearer. Soft golden haze wove itself over everything. The strange little alley, with its architecture of the Middle Ages, and its crucifix leaning against the black church wall, looked like an old picture painted on a gold background.

"Is Monsieur Delileo at home?" asked Gesa at the door of the well-known dwelling. The unaccustomed Flemish words fell haltingly from his lips. The maid, who was busied (unexampled waste of time!) in cleaning the threshold, looked up at him somewhat astonished, and nodded. His heart beat as he entered the vestibule, and hastily cleared the old wooden stairs that groaned under the storming of his impatient young feet. He knocked at the door but received no answer, and he entered the chamber, which still contained the old green carpet. It was much cleaner than when he and Delileo had lived there together; even a little coquettish in its arrangement. A strange narcotic, dreamy odor streamed to meet him. Under the portrait of the Gualtieri, in the crumbling delft pitcher, stood a large bouquet of tempting iris-hued poppies,--those bewitching, beautiful, enormous flowers that are known by the name of "*pavots de Nice*."

The door of this first room was open; on the outer wall of the farther chamber was a glass enclosed balcony. There at a little round table, opposite one another, sat Delileo--and his daughter! Gesa started, and looked at the maiden dumb with admiration. Nowhere except in Italy had he seen features with at once such regular and such peculiarly rounded lines. The girl's little head rested upon a pair of strong classic shoulders, her colorless face was lighted by a pair of mysterious, dark eyes, and scarlet lips. Delileo's daughter, notwithstanding she scarcely counted seventeen years, had nothing of the angular grace that belongs to Northern maidens: her whole being breathed an enchanting, luxuriant ripeness.

While Gesa stood there, lost in this unexpected vision, Delileo looked up, winked as if dazzled, stretched out his head, the young musician smiled and stepped forward.

"Gesa! Thou!" and in the next moment the "droevige Herr" held his foster son in his arms. The two shed some pleasant tears, then Delileo pushed the young man away from him, the better to see him, then he embraced him again. "And will you stay with us for a little while?" he asked, and his voice trembled.

"As long as you will let me, father," replied Gesa. "I want to work in quiet near you; that is, I know that here is no place for me, but I will lodge in your neighborhood. But"--he looked around at the young girl, "make me acquainted with my sister!"

"Ah! right! Well, Annette, this is Gesa von Zuylen, of whom I have so often told you. Tell him he is welcome, and you, Gesa, give her a kiss, as a brother should!"

The evening meal was over, the long grey May twilight had extinguished all the golden shimmer. Only one slender red ray fell from a street lamp along the alley, and a second glistened in the colored glass of the church window.

Gesa sat comfortably leaning back in the softest armchair the establishment afforded, and explained to the attentive Gaston his numerous plans for composition.

Annette was silent: her large eyes shone in the twilight.

Gesa talked and talked and the "droevige Herr" only interrupted him from time to time to cry "cela sera superbe!"

Rhythmically scanned, mystically blended, the far-off sounds of the city penetrated to the Rue Ravestein like a monotonous slumber song. The dreamy relaxing smell of the poppies grew stronger with the incoming night, and from time to time there was the rustle of a leaf that detached itself and fell dying onto the cold marble of the gueridon.

## IX

The poppies lay in the gutter and many other fresh and gracious flowers had withered under

the portrait of the Gualtieri. May had become June, and June July. Every evening Gesa explained his projects to his foster-father, played one and another melody on his violin, or sketched the whole of an ensemble movement for him on the old spinet, received Gaston's assurance "*cela cera superbe!*" improvised a great deal, listened dreamily to the singing and ringing in his soul, and--accomplished nothing. He had lodged himself in a neighboring attic, at a washerwoman's, but spent the whole day in the home of Delileo, now made still more attractive by the gracious presence of Annette.

The "droewige Herr" had found a regular situation, probably for his daughter's sake. He busied himself as secretary of the theatre and also as *feuilletonist* of a newspaper. This procured him steady employment. His housekeeping now bore the stamp, not of limited means, but of slovenly comfort, the comfort of the Rue Ravestein.

Gesa felt at home in this disorder. He always found a comfortable sofa on whose arms he could rest his hands while he talked about the future, and in whose cushions he could lean back his head while he searched for the outlines of impending fortune among the smoke-clouds from his cigarette; and he always found a bottle of good Bordeaux on the table when he seated himself at dinner.

He loved the long idling meal times, which lifted from him the necessity of doing anything, and furnished such a plausible excuse for his beloved laziness: he loved to sit and dally with his coffee, while Annette sat opposite and occasionally sipped a little out of his cup. He loved to rummage among the notes of old composers whom no one had ever heard of and to rush through the works of half-forgotten poets. When a verse pleased him, then his eyes glowed, and he would thunder forth the most colossal adjectives, and read the lines two, three, yes twenty times to the little Annette. He might just as well have read to the Flemish servant outside, only she would not, perhaps, have smiled so prettily. Then he would seize note paper and set the verse to music, try his hasty composition on the old spinet, that gave back the stormy melodies of his foaming, effervescing youth in a broken, trembling little voice, like a grandmother on the edge of the grave who sings a love song for the last time. Then Annette must try the verse. She had a splendid contralto voice, and spared no pains to give him pleasure with her singing. But he was never contented. "More expression Annette, more passion!" he would cry. "Do you feel nothing then, absolutely nothing here!" and he tapped her on the heart with his finger. She smiled, colored, and turned her face away.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gaston Delileo had resolved to look upon Annette and Gesa as sister and brother; that cut short all other thoughts, and was very comfortable. He would not notice how much Annette was occupied with her "brother," to what flattering little attentions she accustomed him, with what an expression her large dark eyes sometimes rested upon him. He only noticed that in the beginning Gesa's bearing was perfectly cool, cordial and brotherly. Toward the end of July the latter began to neglect Rue Ravestein a little, and entangled himself in some sort of relation with a Paris actress who, playing an engagement at the Galerie St. Hubert, found herself bored in Brussels. Annette was consumed by jealousy without Gesa's guessing the cause of her disquiet.

"What ails you, Bichette?" he asked, anxiously, stroking her thin cheek with a caressing hand. "What makes you sad? It is this pestilential city air that does not agree with you. Send her to the seashore for a while, father!" The old man shrugged his shoulders--

"Alas!" he murmured. "I have not the means."

"The means! the means!" cried Gesa, "then permit me to advance them. I have lived so long on your generosity!" Gesa forgot how much his little attentions to Mlle. Irma had cost! When he hurried over to his apartment to get a couple of bank notes, he found in his pocketbook just one solitary twenty-franc piece. At first he rubbed his head and stared, then he burst out laughing, and carried his used up purse across to Delileo, "There, laugh at me and my big promises," he cried. "Here, see, this is my whole wealth! But wait, only wait! My hands and my head are full of gold. If only once the right feeling for work would come--the real fever! Do you happen to know where I have laid the libretto for my opera?"

Toward the end of August, Mlle. Irma left Brussels, Gesa became morose, and the mood was favorable to industry.

One morning he felt "the fever." He spread some music paper before him, smoothed it with his hand, cut a pen, planted his elbows on the one shaky table his attic contained, wrote a line, struck it out, stretched himself, and twisted himself--a feeling of physical unrest tormented him. He resolved to go out for a little, and wandered into the park, where he stood still from time to time as if listening to an inward voice, jostling absently against passers-by, and at last sat down upon a bench, thinking deeply. Suddenly a gust of wind passed, lightly at first, then howling loudly through the tree tops overhead. Gesa started, pressed his hands to his temples, a flood of music streamed through his soul. He hurried back to his attic, and wrote and wrote.

The hour at which he was accustomed to find himself at lunch with Annette,--Delileo seldom came home for this meal,--was long past, the late supper time had come--Gesa still bent over his music paper. Single leaves lay strewn around him on the floor. Some one knocked at the door--he did not hear. Delileo entered. "What are you doing, my boy, that one sees nothing of you to-day. Are you sick?"

Gesa stared at him as if awakened from a strange dream. "No," he answered, simply, "I am working."

He was very pale and his hands trembled. Delileo insisted that he must interrupt his work at least long enough to take some nourishment. Gesa followed him unwillingly. He sat at table, ate nothing, did not speak, but gazed steadily at one spot like a ghost seer. After supper he wandered up and down the sitting-room, humming disconnected melodies to himself, clutched from time to time at the keys of the old spinet, threw out with short lips a single tone in which some sort of grand finale seemed to culminate, lashed about him urging on an imaginary orchestra, stamped suddenly on the floor and cried "Bravo!"

Delileo, who had had plenty to do, in his day, with poets and composers, let him quietly alone; treating him with the forbearance which is accorded to the unhappy, the weak-minded, and geniuses. But Annette could not understand this strange behavior, and at last she broke out in a gay laugh.

Strange to say Gesa took this childishness very ill, and left the chamber with a hastily muttered "good-night."

Until the grey of morning he was working at his opera.

Several days went by, days during which Gesa neither ate nor slept, looked excited and irritable, yet at the same time enjoyed an indescribable painful happiness, a condition of supreme exaltation. In vain Delileo warned him, "Don't overwork, one can strain the creative faculty as well as the voice, be moderate!" Gesa only shook his handsome head and smiled to himself with eyes half shut. Perhaps he had not heard a word his foster-father had been saying.

And then, suddenly, when, shouting an exultant Eureka to himself, he finished the finale of the fifth act,--the third and fourth were not even begun yet,--his inspiration failed. Pegasus threw him, as an overworked and maltreated Pegasus will,--threw him from the Spheres of Light down into the regions of Earthly Misery.

Painful headaches, and fathomless melancholy tormented him, his own performance seemed suddenly repulsive to him: where at first he had only seen the beauties of his work, he now recognized nothing but its deficiencies, compared it with the works of other masters, ground his teeth, and beat his brow. He condemned his own composition unmercifully, as overstrained and absurdly romantic. He could only endure the coldest, driest musical fare. A Nocturne of Chopin threw him into a nervous excitement. He practiced the "Chaconne" by Bach incessantly. He looked like one who was convalescing from a severe illness. With neglected dress and dragging step he lounged about aimlessly, or brooded by the hour, all in a heap, head on hand, in the darkest corner of the green sitting-room. Once after he had been trying a new composition, in careless fashion on his violin, he put the instrument away with nervous haste, threw himself into the great leather armchair that was regarded as his by all the family, bit restlessly at his nails a moment, and then suddenly broke into convulsive sobbing. Then came Annette shyly to him, stroked his hair pityingly, and whispered, "Poor Gesa, does it hurt so to be a Genius?" He drew her onto his knee, kissed her often and ardently on hair, eyes, mouth, and when half glad, half frightened, she drew away, he allowed her to slip from his arms, but took both her hands and said softly, looking up at her with true-hearted eyes, "Annette, my good little Annette, can you endure me? Will you be my wife? Not now, but when I am become a great artist. Perhaps I may yet, for your sake."

She blushed, and stammered, "What can you want of such a foolish girl as I am?"

"But if she just happens to please me," he jested, much moved.

She bent her young head over his hand and kissed it, then she nestled down on a stool at his feet. When Gaston came home he found them thus, and gave his blessing upon the betrothal.

Gesa's affection for his betrothed grew ever day more tender, and more devoted. Her behavior toward him changed, in that she laid aside something of her bashfulness, and adopted a tone of teasing perversity.

Since it was no longer possible to regard his children as brother and sister, Gaston resolved to beg that Gesa would limit his intercourse with Annette to evening visits, and a daily walk. O those daily walks! Annette liked the frequented streets, and loved to stand before the show windows of the shops where finery was kept, while she asked her lover if he would give her this or that pretty thing if he were a great artist. Her fancies, as yet, were not very expensive, and seldom rose above a dainty ribbon or a coquettish pair of bronze slippers. He smiled at her questions and usually sent her the desired object next morning, accompanied by a pretty, cordial, unpretending little note. A few lessons which he was giving enabled him to indulge in this lover-like extravagance.

Unlike Annette, he had a disinclination for frequented streets, and strolled more willingly with her in the park, at this time quite desolate, and deserted of human kind. Dreaming and forgetful of all the world, he walked beside her under the trees that sighed in the November wind. Here and there the paths were broken by large puddles, and when no one was looking he lifted the maiden lightly over. Annette did not care for a little splashing, and leaned all the more heavily on her lover's arm. Sometimes, when he went along quite too dumb and absent at her side, she gave his arm a little pinch to arouse him, and cried "Wake up, tell me something." Then he would look down at her with wet, happy eyes and murmur, "I love you." He was beyond all bounds in love, and beyond all measure tiresome. But he composed at this time very industriously although more collectedly, and with less exaltation. He had postponed the completion of his opera for the present, and had nearly finished instead a dramatic work, in oratorio form, founded on Dante's Inferno.

## XI

"Annette!" cried Gesa, one evening in the end of November, bursting breathless into the green sitting-room. "Annette! Father!"

"What is it, my boy?" asked Delileo.

"De Sterny has written to me. He is coming next week to Brussels."

"Oh!" said Annette, irritated and disappointed, "I certainly thought you had drawn the great lottery prize or had come to astonish us with an engagement at five thousand francs a month."

"Why! Annette!" cried Gesa.

"No wonder that you rejoice," said the tender and sympathetic Delileo, and seeing that Gesa kept his great tragic eyes fixed on Annette's face, with an expression of reproachful surprise, he added soothingly, "You must not take her indifference to heart, she does not know what 'de Sterny' is."

So Gesa spent that evening in explaining to his betrothed bride what de Sterny had been to him for the last ten years, and what the virtuoso's name meant to his grateful heart.

## XII

She had understood--the virtuoso's nimbus had become quite visible to her. Gesa need fear no longer that she would not know how to value his great friend sufficiently. How could it be otherwise? His name was to be encountered everywhere. All the newest bon-bons, patent leathers, pocket handkerchiefs were named after him, and the children played at "Concert and Virtuoso," just as in the earliest youth of our century they had played "Consul and Battle of



Marengo." Annette was taking singing lessons now. Another little luxury that Gesa had provided for her, and at her singing teacher's house the girls whom she met there talked of nothing but de Sterny. The uncle of one pupil was conductor at the "Monnaie" de Sterny had called upon him, and had forgotten his gloves on going away. The said pupil brought those gloves to the next singing lesson; they were cut in pieces and divided among Signor Martini's feminine pupils. Years afterward, more than one of these gushers wore a bit of leather round her neck, sewed up in a little silk bag!

At this time de Sterny had reached the zenith of his fame. His last tour through Russia had resembled a triumph. In Odessa they had received him with the discharge of cannon, in Moscow a procession had gone to meet him, huzzahing students had unhitched the horses from his coach and the fairest women had showered down flowers from the windows upon his illustrious head, as the cortege passed through the principal streets; in Petersburg a grand duchess had insisted upon his lodging in her palace; sable furs, laurel wreaths, diamond rings, casks of caviare, and a golden samovar, had all been humbly laid at his feet by Russian enthusiasm. All this Gesa related to his beloved. What he failed to tell her was that the greatest ladies had contended for de Sterny's favor, and that a princess cruelly scorned by him had shot herself at one of his concerts while he was playing! But these things she learned from the girls in the singing class. They interested her much more than de Sterny's other triumphs.

Of course Gesa went to meet the virtuoso at the station. But as half Brussels besides were assembled at the "gare du nord," for the same purpose, de Sterny could only dismiss his protégé with a cordial pressure of the hand, and an invitation to visit him next morning at the Hotel de Flandres.

When Gesa entered at the appointed hour, he found de Sterny sitting at his desk, with his head on one hand and a pen in the other: a sheet of music paper, covered with notes, and full of corrections, lay before him. In his nervous, precise, mechanically polite bearing, that uncomfortable something betrayed itself, which a man contracts from constant association with his superiors. One remarked in him that he had accustomed himself, so to speak, to sleep with open eyes, like hares,--and courtiers.

"Well, how are you? I am truly rejoiced to see you," he cried to Gesa, "it makes me downright young to look in your eyes. I was much astonished to hear of your prolonged stay in Brussels. What the devil are you going to do here? I thought you were with Manager Marinski, on the other side of the world long ago."

"My engagement was broken off--that is I have no desire to bind myself," said Gesa, blushing a little.

"So--here--and meantime you are knocking around"--de Sterny treated the young musician in his old cordial, patronizing manner. "Sapristi! You look splendidly, too well for a young artist. Look me in the face. And what are you really doing? Plans? Eh?"

"O, I am very industrious, I give lessons."

"Oh! lessons! *You*--lessons! *Nom d'un chien!* I should think it would have been more amusing to dig for gold in America with Marinski. Lessons! And so few pretty women learn the violin! Well, and besides lessons, how do you busy yourself?"

"I compose. You seem also"--

"Certainly, certainly," replied de Sterny, pushing the music paper into his portfolio. "But how can a man compose in such a life as I lead? Bah! I have had enough of squandering my existence in railroad cars and concert halls! Oh for four weeks rest, beefsteak and potatoes, country air, flowers and one friend!"

Some one knocked, the virtuoso's servant entered. "I am not at home!" cried de Sterny.

"But it is Count S----"

"I am not at home. Animal! to any one--do you hear!"

The valet vanished.

"You see how it is," grumbled de Sterny, "before another quarter strikes ten persons will have been announced. It is a stale life, always to play the same fool's tricks, always to be applauded for them...."

"Do you perhaps desire to be hissed by way of variety?" laughed Gesa. At this quite innocent repartee the virtuoso changed color a little, and glanced suspiciously first at Gesa and then at the portfolio where he had hidden his composition. But the young violinist's eyes convinced him that no harm was intended. If de Sterny ever had a believing disciple it was Gesa Van Zuylen.

"It is really a shame," earnestly observed the young musician after a while, "that you allow yourself so little time for composition. I have never heard anything of yours but transcriptions--perhaps you will sometime trust me with your more serious work."

De Stern's brows met. "Hm!" growled he--"I can't show the things around. They might take wings. It spoils their eclat if one confides them to all sorts of people before they are published." The blood mounted in Gesa's cheek.

"All sorts of people," he repeated.

But de Stern burst out laughing and cried, "Still so sensitive! I did not mean it in that way. We know you are an exceptional being. *Sacre bleu!* I am the last who would deny it! As soon as I have completed an important work I will lay it before you. But that"--with a glance at the writing desk, "that is nothing, just nothing--the sketch of some ballet music. Princess L----, you remember her, surely, has asked for it. Already at Vienna she wrote me about it--you understand. I couldn't put it off. *C'est assomant*. A Countess-ballet!

"And now be so good as to ring, that they may bring in the breakfast. During the meal you shall confide to me what it really is that holds you fast chained in Brussels, for that you remain solely in order to find leisure for composition I don't believe!"

Over the breakfast Gesa confided his great secret to his friend.

De Stern started up. "So that is it. Well you could not have contrived anything more stupid for yourself!" cried he. "I suspected something, some long drawn out liaison, from which I should have to extricate you. But a betrothal! Oh, yes! What are you thinking of? To marry and become a paterfamilias at your age! It is ruin! It is the grave! The grave of your genius mind, not of your body, that will flourish in the atmosphere of sleek morality. You'll grow fat. You'll celebrate a christening every year. You'll run from one street to another with your trousers turned up and a music book under one arm, giving lessons. And your ambition will culminate in obtaining the post of first violin in some orchestra, or perhaps if it soars very high in becoming conductor of the same. *Sapristi!* You need the whip of the manager over your back, and not the feather bolster of family life under your head! What is more *this* bolster which you are stuffing for yourself will contain few feathers. But that is all one to you. You only need a pretext for laziness, and would go to sleep on a potato sack!"

"You speak like a heretic, like a regular atheist in love," cried Gesa, who had not outgrown his passion for large words. "Who told you I was going to be married the day after to-morrow? I shall not receive her hand until I have secured a position."

"Ah--so! Well--that is some comfort. But who is she? One of your pupils? The blonde daughter of a square-built burgher?"

"She is the daughter of my foster-father."

"O--h! The Gualtieri's daughter. And her you will marry? Marry?"

"You cannot possibly imagine how charming she is," murmured Gesa.

"That the Gualtieri's daughter is charming I can easily imagine," said the virtuoso, and there came suddenly into his eyes an expression of dreamy passion to which they were quite unaccustomed, "but that a man would want to marry the Gualtieri's daughter, I cannot understand. Perhaps you do not know who the Gualtieri was."

Gesa bit his lip.

"She made my foster-father happy."

"So--hm! Made him happy! He was mad as we all were. To have been permitted to black her shoes would have made him happy. I know the history of Delileo's marriage. It is a legend which they still relate in artist circles, only they have got the names wrong. I know the right names because ... Delileo interests me for your sake, and--and--because the Gualtieri ... was my first love!"

Gesa shrank back. "Your first love!" he repeated, breathlessly.

The virtuoso passed his hand over his forehead and smiled bitterly. "Yes! I became acquainted with her in the salon of the d'Agoult. I looked like a girl myself then, was scarcely eighteen years old, and in love! Oh! in love! She laughed at me--I fretted myself with vain desire, she would never notice me. I cannot hear her name now after twenty years without feeling as I did then. Heavens! How beautiful she was! Form, smile, tresses! Dark hair with auburn lights in neck and temples--as if powdered with gold dust. Withal a certain grand carriage...."

The virtuoso ceased and gazed musingly into vacancy. The remembrance of the Gualtieri was a sore spot in his heart. Gesa looked, deeply moved, into the changed countenance of his friend.

"How could such a woman consent to marry Delileo?"

"How? Yes--how? She had lost her voice, her lovers, her health. She was thirty-eight years old. He was of a good family, and still possessed the remains of a handsome fortune, of which he had already squandered the greater part in philanthropic enterprises. He spoiled and pampered her as if she were a princess, and she ... she ran away from him one year and a half after the birth of

her child, your bride,--with an obscure Polish adventurer. Delileo discovered her afterward in the greatest misery, dying of consumption, in a garret; he took her home and nursed her till she died. Poor devil! He had united himself to her against the will of his family, and the counsel of his friends, he was at the end of his money--so he buried himself in the Rue Ravestein. His lot is hard; but--at least he lived a year and a half at her side!"

Alphonse de Sterny ceased, and looked down, brooding.

Gesa laid a hand on his arm.

"The memory of this woman lives so powerfully in you still, and yet you marvel that I want her daughter for my wife--her daughter, who inherits all the mother's charm, without her sinfulness?"

De Sterny smiled, no pleasant smile. "How old is she then--sixteen or seventeen, if I reckon rightly is she not?"

Gesa nodded.

"Ah! So! And you will judge already of her temperament?" He drummed a march on the table. Gesa colored. "De Sterny!" he cried after a pause. "Much as I love you I will not bear to hear you speak in that way. Do me a favor and learn to know the little one--then judge yourself. Come sometime in the evening and drink tea with us, unless you are afraid of the Rue Ravestein!"

"When you will, big child! to-morrow, day after!--You always keep early hours there. I can come before I have to go into society!"

A few minutes later Gesa took leave. De Sterny accompanied him to the door of the apartment, and called gaily after him, over the banisters. "The day after to-morrow then, about eight! I am curious to see your Capua!"--

### XIII

Great excitement reigned in Rue Ravestein No. 10. An odor of freshly baked tea cakes pervaded the stairs and halls. Annette with constantly changing color settled the furniture, now in this place, now in that, trying to hide its deficiencies, her beautiful eyes rested on the green carpet, and she murmured faint-heartedly--"how will it look to him here?" Gesa only smiled, kissed her on the forehead, gave her a confident little pat on the cheek, and said, "He comes to make your acquaintance, my treasure, not to criticize our dwelling."

Even more excited than his daughter was the old Delileo. He had exhumed from a worm-eaten chest an ancient frock with a mighty collar in the ponderous taste of the citizen-king, and attired in this garment, and smelling strongly of camphor, he wandered restlessly from one little chamber to another, dusting off a picture frame with his pocket handkerchief, casting a half-shamed glance into the dull mirror, and pulling with trembling fingers at his imposing silk neck kerchief, which with his beautifully embroidered but rather yellow cambric shirt, had been young under the umbrella-sceptre of Louis Philippe.

Gesa joked at the agitation of his little family, but nevertheless felt it to be perfectly justifiable, in anticipation of the great event.

At eight o'clock every heart beat; five minutes after eight Delileo remarked "perhaps he won't come"; at a quarter past Annette turned a surprised look on her lover, and said, "but he promised you positively, Gesa!" at half past eight a stir was heard on the floor below. "It is an excuse from de Sterny," said Delileo, going to meet disappointment, as was his custom.

"Shall I find Monsieur Delileo here?" a very cultivated voice was heard asking, on the stairs. Gesa rushed out. The old journalist passed a thumb and fore finger over his cheeks--to give himself an unembarrassed air, Annette disappeared.

A few seconds later the door opened, and into the shabby green salon there came an aristocratic-looking blonde man, who was a little embarrassed by the fact that he had not been able to lay aside his fur coat in the hall. This did not last a moment, however. Scarcely had Gesa relieved him of the heavy garment than he held out his hand cordially to the master of the house, whom Gesa formally presented, and said "we are old acquaintances!" and when the "droewige Herr" would have set aside this compliment with a deprecating wave of the hand, de Sterny continued, "You perhaps may not remember the love-sick dreamer whom you met in old times at the Countess d'Agoult's. But I have not forgotten your sympathizing kindness. It did me good. We

had then, as I believe, the same trouble--only"--with a glance at the Gualtieri's picture which his quick searching eye had already discovered--"later you were happier than I!"

Then verily tears filled the eyes of the "droewigen Herrn," and he pressed the virtuoso's hand.

"Well?" de Sterny glanced merrily at Gesa, "I was promised something more than a meeting with old friends,--a new acquaintance?"

Gesa looked around. "Oh, the little goose, she has hidden." He hurried into the next room--they heard his tender reassuring "*vollons fillette*, don't be a child!"

On Gesa's arm, timid, abashed, pale from excitement, deep feverish red on her lips, she came toward the virtuoso, and laid her little ice-cold fingers in his offered hand.

As if bewitched he stared at the young girl, then collecting himself, he kissed her soft child-hand, chivalrously and said, "You must pardon me this, Fräulein, I am a very old friend of your betrothed, and was once an obscure, but intense admirer of your mother." Then turning to Delileo, he added "the resemblance is perfectly startling--it is a resurrection!"

No one could be more amiable than de Sterny was in the Rue Ravestein, and moreover his amiability cost him not the slightest effort. Like other grand gentlemen he took pleasure in making small excursions into spheres where it would have been frightful for him if he had been obliged to live.

Toward old Delileo he adopted a tone of modest deference, toward Gesa, as always heretofore, one of half boon-companion, half paternal banter. He drank two cups of tea, boasted of his hunger, and praised the dainty tea cakes.

Delileo poured out reminiscences which dated as far back as his frock, and were just as much in accordance with modern taste. Silent and pale the Gualtieri's daughter sat before the guest. She did not raise her eyes to him once, yet no detail of his appearance escaped her. As he expected that evening to return from the Rue Ravestein into the world, he wore evening dress which became him well. His white cravat, his open waistcoat and carefully arranged hair, were for her a revelation.

He addressed her repeatedly, but she only answered in monosyllables.

"Is not mademoiselle musical?" he asked, turning from these laborious attempts at conversation to Delileo.

"Yes, she sings a little!"

"Has her voice any resemblance to--to"--de Sterny stopped short.

"Say, will you sing something for us, Bijou?" whispered Gesa to the girl, "we will not urge you, but if...."

"You would give me such great pleasure!" said de Sterny.

Making no answer, with a heavy movement, as if walking in sleep, the young girl rose, went to the spinet, and laid a sheet of music on the desk. It was the fine old romance of Martini--"plaisir d'Amour." The virtuoso instantly offered to accompany her. She nodded shyly. Softly and sadly through the shabby green chamber sounded the immortal love song, a song which the united efforts of all the female pupils in the Conservatories of Europe have not succeeded in killing.

Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un instant,  
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie!--

She held her hands, as she had been taught, lightly laid in one another, but the delicate head, contrary to regulation, was inclined toward the right shoulder--as if it had suddenly grown heavy. Her voice sounded hollow and mournful; it trembled as if with suppressed sobs.

"She is afraid of you," said Gesa, who had come up to her side, "I don't know in the least what ails her. Usually she does not want courage. *Pauvre petite chat*"--and he stroked her hair gently.

The virtuoso's brow fell, as if it hurt him to witness these innocent caresses. He turned to Delileo.

"It is the same voice, absolutely the same voice! A wonderful likeness! Now, mademoiselle, you will grant me just one more trifle, will you not?"

Gesa brought out from a pile of music a written sheet, and laid it on the rack. "Just do this, Annette," he urged, taking up his violin. "The song is for voice and violin," he said--"Please give me an A, de Sterny." De Sterny struck the note.

It was the "Nessun maggior dolore" from his own music to Dante's Inferno, which Gesa had

laid on the music desk. A strange composition, in which the human voice swelled from soft half audible revery to bitter despairing utterance of pain, while the violin gave out a melody of penetrating sweetness, like the torturing memory of long vanished joy. Gesa's cheeks were burning as he finished the performance of this his favorite composition. De Sterny let his hands glide from the keyboard, and fixed the violinist with a sharp look, "That is yours?" he asked.

Gesa nodded.

"Then let yourself be embraced on the spot. It is simply superb!"

It was toward eleven o'clock before de Sterny remembered that duty called him back into "the world." Gesa had shown him several more of his own compositions, and in everything the virtuoso had taken the liveliest interest.

Gesa accompanied his friend from the Rue Ravestein into the region of civilization. De Sterny was absent and silent. "Well, what do you say?" urged his disciple, pressingly.

"You will have very great success."

"In what--in my marriage?" laughed Gesa.

"Ah your marriage!" The virtuoso started--"yes, your marriage. Well--she is the most enchanting creature I have met since her mother. What a voice--she could become a Malibran."

"And?"--

They were standing now at the Place Royale. "*Dieu merci*--there comes a carriage--I despaired of finding one," cried de Sterny. "Adieu--bring me the whole of your 'Inferno' to-morrow--auf Wiedersehen!"

With this he sprang into the fiacre which had stopped at a sign from him, and rolled away.

In the Rue Ravestein that evening there was a great deal to talk about. Old Delileo, whose cheeks glowed as if he had been drinking champagne, was very loquacious. Gesa confided to Annette word for word, de Sterny's flattering judgment upon her, but she showed herself nervous and irritable like a child too early waked from sleep. She complained that she had sung badly. She who had always so kindly indulged the garrulity of her poor old father, scarcely listened to him, even made impatient little grimaces, and said his way of walking up and down put her beside herself. When the old man sat down with a hurt air, then she broke into tears and begged his forgiveness.

Gesa drew her onto his knees, dried her tears, and quieted her with playful caresses. "She lives too isolated; the least thing excites her, father?" said he, stroking her cheek. "We must find some amusement for her."

The "droewige Herr," looked down gloomily.

About three o'clock de Sterny mounted the stairs of his hotel. He had been honored and flattered exactly as much as ever, but he felt out of spirits.

"Every street urchin knows my name now, and the crossing sweepers show each other the celebrated de Sterny when I pass. But when I die, what will remain of me! Nothing but a few wretched piano pieces, which they will laugh at after my death."

The songs of the violinist rang in his ears. He shivered. He thought of the beautiful girl, and passed his hand across his forehead.

"Hm!--the danger of a quiet family life does not threaten him from that quarter. She sleeps as yet; but she has inherited all the passionateness of her mother and all the nervousness of her father. How beautiful she is! How beautiful!"

## XIV

It was about this time that de Sterny began to be restlessly ambitious. His playing changed. He began to take on affectations. He began to pound. This enraptured the masses; the critics pronounced it "a magnificent development," and he himself was disgusted.

An icy crust covered the gutter in the Rue Ravestein, long icicles hung from the arms of the

great crucifix, and on the windows of the little green salon the frost painted his chilly flowers; but Annette's hands were always hot now, and her lips burning red. Her walk had grown slow and careless, her movements dreamy and gliding. Her eyes gazed into the distance. Instead of teasing wilfulness, or childlike winningness, she met her lover with apathetic compliance, sometimes with repellent irritation. Then would come hours when she hung upon him passionately, begged him with tears not to be angry with her, and seemed as though she could not show him love and tenderness enough.

He did not ponder very deeply over her strange contradictory nature, but simply forgave her, as a sick child.

One evening, when he and his foster-father were involved in one of their endless talks about music and literature, Annette, who had sat meanwhile, reserved and silent, leaning back in a corner of the stiff horse-hair sofa, suddenly raised her head and listened. Some one knocked at the door: neither Gesa nor Delileo paid any attention.

"Entrez," cried Annette, breathlessly. The door opened. "Do I disturb you?"--said an amiable voice, and Alphonso de Stern entered.

Several days later, Gesa, returning from his lessons to the Rue Ravestein, remarked, "Strange, Annette, it smells of amber,--has de Stern been here?"

"He brought us tickets for his next concert," she replied without looking at her lover.

\* \* \* \* \*

"DEAR FRIEND:--I have something to say to you--come to me to-morrow, if possible.

"STERNY."

Gesa found this note one evening in his apartment. Next morning, when he dutifully presented himself at the Hotel de Flandres, de Stern received him with the question--"Would you like to earn a great deal of money?"

"How can you doubt it! You know how pressingly I need money. Can it be an opportunity offers for disposing of my 'Inferno,'" cried Gesa.

"Not yet--but something else offers. I received a telegram yesterday. Winansky has broken an arm--Marinski, in consequence, needs a violinist of the first rank and offers ten thousand francs a month and expenses. Would that suit you?" Gesa's head sank. "How long must I remain away?" he murmured.

"Six--eight months. You must decide by tomorrow. Are you afraid of seasickness?" laughed the virtuoso.

"That?--No! but--Well I will ask the little one. Six or eight months--it is long--and so far. She will not have the courage. However, I thank you heartily!"

The servant announced an illustrious amateur and Gesa left.

To his great astonishment Annette exulted and rejoiced when he told her of Marinski's offer. "I did not know that you were already such a great man in the world," she cried, triumphantly.

"Shall I accept?" asked Gesa, with a trembling voice, tears standing in his eyes. She looked at him amazed. "Would you refuse? Gesa, only think when you come back from America, a rich man!"

He sighed once deeply, then he bent over her, kissed her forehead, and quietly said, "You are right, Annette. I was cowardly!"

He accepted Marinski's offer.

A few days later, a little dinner was served in the Rue Ravestein, which was very elaborate for the surroundings, and at which Gesa left all his favorite dishes untouched, and old Delileo exerted himself to talk very rapidly about the most indifferent things, shook pepper into his marmalade, and finally raised his glass with a trembling hand and gave a toast to Gesa's speedy, happy return. Annette, who up to this time had regarded Gesa's departure with the most frivolous gaiety, became every moment more painfully excited. She ate nothing, said not a word, and looked wretched, pain and terror were in her eyes. When Gesa drew her to him, and kindly stroked her pallid cheeks, she broke into immoderate weeping, clung to him convulsively, and begged him again and again "do not leave me alone--do not leave me alone!"

He made no answer to her unreasonable words, only pitied her most tenderly, called her a thousand sweet names, and said, turning to Delileo, "Try to divert her a little, father--take her sometimes to the theatre, and as soon as pleasant weather comes, take her to the country. And read with her a little,--none of the complicated old trash that we delight in, but something simple, entertaining, to suit a spoiled little girl."

"Is there any one in the world, better than he is, papa?" sobbed Annette. The servant entered and announced that the carriage was waiting at the Place Royale, and the porter was there to take Monsieur Gesa's luggage, at the same time clutching his traveling bag and violin case. Gesa looked at the clock. "It is time," said he, quietly, "be reasonable, Annette!"

But she sobbed incessantly, "do not leave me alone," and he was forced to unclasp her dear, soft arms from his neck. He pressed his foster-father's hand in silence, and hastened away. From the street, he heard the sound of a window opening above, and Annette's voice. He stood still, looked back--cried "Auf Wiedersehen!"--and hurried on to the Place Royale.

Before the train puffed off, a slender, blonde man rushed onto the platform. "De Sterny!" cried Gesa, deeply moved.

"Well, well, you expected me I hope. I slipped away from the X's in order to catch you. You understand that I did not want to let you go without wishing you 'bonne chance' for the last time."

The conductor opened the door of the coupé--Gesa entered it.

"Bonne chance! it can't fail you"--cried de Sterny.

Gesa bent out of the coach window. "Thousand thanks for all your kindness," he cried, "and if it is not too tiresome for you,--then to-morrow look in a moment, to see how it is with her."

"I will take her your last greeting," said de Sterny.

The virtuoso beckoned smilingly, while the train steamed away.

Thus, smiling, kind, sympathetic, Gesa lost sight of his friend. Thus he remained in Gesa's memory.

## XV

Thanks to a sudden outbreak of yellow fever in the South, Marinski's troupe left America earlier than had been agreed upon.

With salary somewhat diminished by this circumstance, a bundle of bombastic critiques, and some very pretty ornaments from Tiffany's in New York for Annette, Gesa went on board the "Arcadia," in which Marinski's troupe were to sail for old Europe. How he rejoiced for his "little one!" She had looked so badly when he left Brussels, was so inconsolable at parting. He resolved to give her a surprise by his sudden return. What great eyes she would make! Sometimes at night he started from sleep--a cry of joy and her name on his lips.

The whole troupe knew why he was hurrying home. He never grew weary of telling about Annette. About Annette and de Sterny. He was much beloved by all his traveling companions, and they all felt a lively interest in Annette; but of de Sterny they would not hear a word; and an old basso, who had taken Gesa especially to his heart, said warningly--

"Take care! he will play you a trick--he is a villain, monsieur!"

Gesa took the caution very ill, and starting up rebuked the basso severely.

The basso smiled to himself.

Among the female forces of the troupe was a certain Guiseppina D----. Pale, with rich red hair that when she uncoiled it reached to her heels, her enormous black eyes, short nose, and large mouth lent her some likeness to a death's head. Yet, she was not without a certain charm, especially in her smile, and she smiled constantly, as people do whom nothing can any longer rejoice. To her Gesa talked oftenest about his beloved. She listened to him most kindly and sometimes she wept. She was the soprano of the troupe, and lived in the bitterest enmity with the Alto, who was married to the Tenor, immensely jealous, and very proud of her own virtue.

In Paris, when the troupe broke up, the Guiseppina at parting put both arms around Gesa's neck and kissed him. This the virtuous Alto certainly would not have done. But the Guiseppina whispered at the same time,

"The kiss is for thee, with my good wishes, and this"--she gave him a little gold cross--"this is for the bride, with my mother's blessing that clings to it yet. It belonged to my First Communion, and is the only one of my possessions which is worthy a bride of yours."

They all promised to come to his wedding, and at last he had bidden them farewell, and had left Paris for Brussels.

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It was in the second half of June and Corpus Christi day. At all the stations groups of girls in white were to be seen. Now and then white-robed processions passed in the distance, and softly as from a spirit choir their Catholic hymns floated to the traveler's ear.

It was late in the afternoon when he arrived in Brussels, sprang into a fiacre, and directed it to the Rue Ravestein. The hack, with all the vexatious phlegm of a Brussels' vehicle, jogged slowly toward its destination.

The moist, heavy sultriness of a northern summer brooded over the town. The air had something oppressive, stifling, like that of a hot room. Above the earth all was motionless, except that in the very topmost branches of the linden trees on the Boulevard there was a light rustling. From the ground steamed the moisture of yesterday's showers; in the sky the clouds were piling up for another thunderstorm, with muttered growl along the horizon. The atmosphere was heavy and sad with the odor of incense, burning wax, candles, and withering flowers, the odor of Corpus Christi Day. Against the walls of the houses still leaned the altars that had been erected, surmounted by shriveled foliage, and dead blossoms. Luxuriant roses, tender heliotrope and modest reseda lay trodden and soiled on the pavement.

As Gesa alighted at the Place Royale a woman in a battered hat, gaudily be-ribboned, and a red shawl, stooped down after some of the faded flowers. She was one of those who hide themselves when the Corpus Christi procession passes by. She lived in the Rue Ravestein, and Gesa knew her. Always pitiful, he took a twenty-france piece from his pocket and gave it to her. She glanced up, looked at him sharply and suddenly turned away her painted face.

He entered the Rue Ravestein. Sickening miasmas rose from the drain; a cloud of midges hovered in the air;--the crucified Saviour looked down more sadly than ever.

Familiar things greeted his eyes as he passed: the lean hyena-like dogs wagged their tails, and some of them came and shoved cold moist noses into his hand.

"No one is at home!" cried the woman who sold vegetables in the shop on the ground floor of Delileo's dwelling. "No one. Neither the old gentleman, nor the young lady."

"Have they gone on a journey?" asked Gesa, blankly.

"No, I think not. Unless I am mistaken the young lady has gone to church. Perhaps monsieur will find her yet in St. Gudule."

Gesa was already hastening down the street toward the Cathedral. Behind him little groups collected. The gossips of Rue Ravestein laughed.

## XVI

On an irregular square, from which numberless streets and alleys spread themselves out like rays, rises the Cathedral of St. Gudule. Light and transparent in architecture, bearing herself proudly--the church towers above the city where the ghosts of Horn and Egmont walk. Her walls are blackened as if they wore mourning for the crimes which men have committed here in God's name; and through her cool aisles sighs the mouldy breath of a vault. Gesa entered. It was dusky within; thick shadows covered the feet of the brown, worm-eaten benches. Only a few people still remained. In vain the violinist looked around for his bride. A couple of old women he saw: a child



in a blue apron, stretching on tiptoe to reach the holy water, two beggars near the door--that was all. No priest was at the altar: service was over.

The child had tripped away: the old woman had hobbled off; for the last time Gesa's eye searched the church, then he went on to the high altar and knelt down to say a prayer. In spite of the fantastic pantheism in which Delileo had brought him up, Gesa had always retained a strong leaning toward Catholic devotion. Suddenly he heard a sound,--a sigh. In the deepest shadow, almost at his feet, crouched a dark form. A tender trouble overcame him.

"Annette!" he whispered--"Annette!"

She rose up out of the shadow. She stared at him, gave a short cry, and clung shuddering to a pillar.

"Annette! What ails you!" he cried, shocked, almost angry. "Are you afraid of me?"

She shook her head. Was it the dusk that made her look so ashen pale?

"You come so suddenly, and I am ill;" she said.

"Ill, poor heart! Then truly I must have appeared to you like a ghost. And I wanted to enjoy your surprise! Foolish egotist that I am! Forgive me!" Thus he stammered, and forgetting where he was would have drawn her to him. She motioned him from her. "Not here!" she cried. Looking around at the sacred walls, with an intense gaze--"Not here!" Leaning on his arm she passed out of the church door.

The air was moist and sultry, clouds hung low, a swallow fluttered anxiously across the square. In comparison with the dusky gloom of the church it was still quite light here. Gesa raised questioning, longing eyes to the face of his beloved. It was deathly pale, the cheek thinner, the eyes larger, the lips darker than formerly; little lines about the mouth and nose, melancholy shadows around the eyes idealized its heretofore purely material beauty.

"I had quite forgotten how charming thou art," he murmured, in a voice stifled with passion. She smiled at him, a wild strange smile, in which she grew still more beautiful, and the shadows around her eyes deepened.

It suddenly seemed to him that she reminded him of some one, of something, but he searched his soul in vain. It could not be of the pale Malmaison roses whose tender heads drooped, on the pavement,--or,--no,--and yet--yes,--a little,--Annette reminded him of Guiseppina!

Her hand, which she had left to him passively in the beginning, nestled now more tenderly on his arm. When they would have turned their steps toward the Rue Ravestein, she held him back.

"What if we should make a detour," she whispered, "take me to the park, to all your favorite places, will you?"

"My heart! My treasure!" he murmured, drunk with the rapture of her presence.

An odor of withering flowers impregnated the air, mixed with the faint breath of fresh acacia blossoms. They entered the park. It was as if dead. Through the dark crowns of the trees there passed, from time to time, something like a shudder of fear.

"And you are really ill, Annette?" he asked.

"Yes," and her voice sounded hollow, like a suppressed cry of anguish: then she burst out passionately, "Why did you leave me alone!"

"You sent me away yourself," he replied, half playfully, "and then I had to go."

"That is true," she said, simply.

They were silent. It grew darker. All at once she stood still. "Here was a mire last autumn and you used to carry me over. Do you remember?"

He nodded smiling. They went a few steps further. The white reflection of the evening light played over the water of a reservoir.

"And here you told me about Nice and the Angers Bay."

Again he smiled, and they went on. They came to a statue. "There you gave me a villa in Bordighera. Have you forgotten how we built air castles?" said the girl.

The shuddering in the tree tops grew stronger.

She bent back her head and gazed up at her lover as if in a dream. "No one sees us," she whispered. "Kiss me!"

He kissed her long and passionately. "Again!" she whispered, so softly that her voice sounded like the rustling of the leaves.

He kissed her again, murmuring, "I never knew how fair life was until to-day!"

A long sobbing sigh passed through the trees. "Come home, or the thunderstorm will overtake us," she said--her voice had suddenly grown harsh. They turned back.

## XVII

"I will not expect you to wear it, but you must keep it sacred, as a relic. It was the best thing she possessed," said Gesa to Annette, when he gave her Guiseppina's cross.

He had told the girl about the pale singer and the touching manner in which she had offered her gift. Annette had kissed the cross on the threshold of the house, when she stood to take leave of him. "My father will not be home before midnight"--she whispered "farewell"--whereupon at first he looked most longingly in her face, and then yielding to her decision, said quietly--"Tomorrow." And now he sat in his old attic room, opposite, and mused the evening through. His veins throbbed with a happiness that was painfully sweet. Never had Annette appeared to him so enchantingly beautiful, never had she met him with such heart-winning gentleness. The memory of her tender smile, of her great dark eyes softened his heart like a caress.

But she was ill. A cold shudder broke his warm dream. She was very ill.

A fearful anxiety overcame him. The heavy, sultry air of the coming tempest brooded without, and from the street below rose an odor of filth and decay.

He looked across at Annette's window; it was open. A delicate head appeared there, listening. Against the wall in the pale moonlight a dainty silhouette was thrown.

"Annette!" cried Gesa, across the sleeping street.

Through the dusk he saw her smile.

"Good-night!" she breathed, laid both hands on her lips and sent him one kiss. Then she disappeared. A heavy silence settled down on the Rue Ravestein.

Dizzy and drunk with happiness, that smile in his heart, Gesa von Zuylen laid himself down and fell asleep.

It was not yet five o'clock in the morning when a mysterious stir in the little street awoke him. Excited voices and hasty steps sounding confusedly together. Was it fire? The confusion increased. Something had happened. He hurried on his clothes and went down. The air was raw. In the lustreless morning light there was a pale, reddish shimmer. The sparrows on the roofs twittered over loud. Under Delileo's window stood a few people; untidy women rubbing the sleep out of their eyes, some men in blouses, on their way to work. Like a little flock of vultures, with greedy eyes and outstretched heads, they jostled one another.

The woman of the green grocer shop was speaking. Her face expressed pride at having assisted at some awful event Gesa heard her say:

"I tell you they have just sent my boy to the apothecary. But it's too late--much too late!"

"Has Monsieur Delileo had a stroke?" cried Gesa, breathlessly.

"Mon-sieur De-lileo?" repeated the women. A few of them turned away.

"Annette!" he reeled. "What! What!"

Half beside himself he rushed up the stairs, and burst open the door of his promised bride's chamber. He knew the room well. It was the same which years ago he had occupied with his mother. Only now it was more daintily furnished.

Old Delileo sat on the edge of the little bed, and gazed in tearless despair at something which the white curtains hid.

"Father!" cried Gesa.

Then the old man rose trembling in every limb, passed his hand across his brow--his poor yellow face working....

"Have pity!" he said in a broken voice, "Have pity, she has repented, she is dead!"

Gesa tore back the curtains. There on the white pillow, waxen pale, but beautiful as ever, the parting smile upon her lips, lay Annette.

She had put on the blue dress in which he had first seen her, fourteen months ago--Guiseppe's little cross lay on her breast.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is a suffering so painful that no hand is tender enough to touch it, and so deep that no heart is brave enough to fathom it. Dumbly we sink the head, as before something sacred.

Never could he reproach her, lying there before him, clad in the blue dress, of which every fold, so dear to him, cried "Forgive! Not to our desecrated love do I appeal, but to our sweet caressing friendship,--forgive the sister what the bride has done!" How could he reproach her, with her parting kiss still on his lips?

She had drawn off her betrothal ring, and laid it on the coverlet enclosed in a folded letter, where in her large, unskilled, childish hand, she had written the words: "To my dear, dear brother Gesa. God bless him a thousand times!"

He placed the ring again on her finger, and kissed her cold hand.

The fearful mystery which separates us from our dead is so incomprehensible that we never realize our loss in all its fulness while the beloved form yet lies before us. Involuntarily we feel as if the dead knew of every little service we render--and this thought hovers around us as a comfort. The whole bitterness of our anguish is first felt when we have buried our happiness, and life with its sterile uses and requirements reenters, and commands: "What have you to do longer dallying with death? I will have my right!"

And so with Gesa, the bitterest pang of all overcame him when, returning home with his foster-father from the churchyard where they had laid the poor "little one" to rest, he found the old green salon all in order. Annette's favorite trifles removed, and the table laid for--two.

They sat down opposite one another, the old journalist and the young musician. Neither ate; Gesa was dumb. Delileo stroked his hand from time to time and murmured, "My poor boy, my poor boy!"

Suddenly Gesa raised his eyes to the old man's face. "Who was it, father?" he asked in a hollow voice.

The "droewige Herr" dropped his eyes.

"I-I do not know"--he stammered.

"Father!" cried Gesa, starting up.

"Nay, I knew nothing. She never confided in me. Very lately I had a suspicion, a fear"--the old father grew more and more distressed.

"You must have remarked it, if Annette was interested in any one?" cried Gesa, anger in his eyes and shame on his cheeks.

"Ah! she fell under the spell of a demon"--the father stopped, and shut his lips tightly together, and said no more.

One day followed another in monotonous sadness. The "droewige Herr" went to his daily work: Gesa sat in the green salon and brooded. He said nothing of any more engagement, nothing of going on any more journeys. He dreaded every meeting with acquaintances, with all to whom he had talked of his happiness. There was one single human being for whom he longed, and that was de Stern. De Stern had such a rare, almost feminine art of understanding and sympathizing! And then, he would not be surprised like the others--he had foretold it all!

Gesa learned de Stern's whereabouts. The virtuoso was in England. Gesa wrote him a simple, heartfelt letter, in which he confided to his friend the sudden death of Annette, and ended with the words "Let me know when you are to be in Paris. I will remove there, in order to work near you. Intercourse with you is the only thing in the world that could afford me any comfort now."

To this letter he received no answer. He removed to Delileo's and occupied Annette's chamber.

One day, as he sat at the poor girl's little desk, and searched a drawer for an envelope, he found wedged in a crack the half of a torn note. He knew the writing. "... wild with bliss. At one o'clock in the Rue de la Montague

Thy S."

The violinist read this note twice, then he looked around with a dull, stupefied gaze, stretched his arms on high as those do who are shot through the heart, and sank senseless to the floor.

\* \* \* \* \*

A lingering nervous fever broke his constitution, and destroyed the little energy he had still possessed. When he began to creep about his chamber, a weary convalescent, with thinned hair, he sought at once for pen and ink. Every day he wrote a letter to de Stern, and tore it in pieces. When Delileo, who had nursed him through the sickness like a mother, begged him not to excite himself, he only answered, "I must have it off my heart!" and wrote a fresh letter,--but never sent any.

One day he said to himself that it did not become him to write, that he must demand satisfaction from de Stern face to face. But before that could happen he must recover his health. From that time he wrote no more. He lived his brooding life, idle, and melancholy. His grief was mingled with a burning shame. He constantly feared that he should meet some one who would ask him about his bride, or his friend. At the thought the blood rushed into his cheek, and even when he was quite alone he turned his face to the wall. He trembled in every limb, a wild rage possessed him when he thought of the betrayer. Then--then he remembered the thousand kindnesses to which the virtuoso had accustomed him, his amiability, the cordial tone of his voice. He pressed his hands to his temples and groaned.

He could not understand.

And the days went by, and he did not seek de Stern. A wild fear of men mastered him. By day he almost never left Delileo's dwelling, but, as his health improved, he gradually accustomed himself to go out at night. He was still young. He felt a vehement desire to deaden the power of feeling. In the midst of the wildest orgies, he sat pale and dumb, with fixed expressionless face. This joyless dissipation he soon gave up, but his wound still craved relief--and slowly, gradually, he gave himself to drink. Music he neglected altogether. Every note awoke a memory. If he had been obliged to earn his bread by his profession, he would probably not have gone so utterly to ruin, but the money which he had brought back from America permitted him to live.

When old Delileo, whom it cut to the heart to see his dear one's hopeless suffering, and his splendid talents so sadly wasted, asked him questions in regard to the future, Gesa answered, "I will work again, but leave me alone now for a while--it is too hard yet." And his fear of mankind more and more sought concealment in Rue Ravestein. In all large cities there are alleys like the Rue Ravestein. Paris has many of them. A man flies thither when he has suffered a fiasco, or a great sorrow, hides himself there from the derision of enemies and the pity of friends ... pity which at the best seems to him but a sentimental form of contempt! He has no intention of passing his whole life in that unwholesome obscurity, he will only give his wounds time to heal. Meanwhile he forges many plans in this voluntary exile; and dreams how he will go back to the world sometime and retrieve all by a grand success. The dreams never see fulfilment. For such streets are graves, and whoever after long years seeks to flee from that solitude, wanders among men like a risen corpse. Superannuated ideas surround and cling to him like the mouldy air of the sepulchre. He speaks a dead language.

## XVIII

"The 'satan' is one of the most beautiful of modern musical compositions," announces the *Indépendance Belge*. "The 'satan' contains numbers of classic beauty," confess the artists. "Have you heard? The 'satan' is a tremendous success!" says the fashionable world to itself. "Satan's" renown penetrates even as far as the Rue Ravestein, and reaches the ear of a starving fiddler there.

Although Delileo has long been dead Gesa still lives in the old house. The remains of his little savings went during his foster-father's long and weary last illness. Now Gesa supports life as best he can. A dozen years ago every one was comparing him to Paganini; now he is counted among the most obscure members of the "Monnaie" orchestra. Benumbed in melancholy indolence, given over to drink, he feels nevertheless from time to time the longing for creative effort. But something always comes between him and his purpose.

When he hears of the approaching performance, under de Stern's personal direction, he is shaken with a sudden wild rage.

How dare de Stern venture on coming to Brussels, in face of the chance that they may meet?

Then he mutters bitterly. "He thinks I am dead. He says to himself, 'If Gesa von Zuylen were still alive the world would have heard of him!'" A fearful pang harrows his very soul. Not the death of his bride, not the treachery of his friend had inflicted a pang like that. The spectre of his great, degraded talent stands suddenly before him.

He has weighed de Stern's powers of composition. He remembers with triumphant contempt the "transcriptions" and "fantasias" of former times. He recalls the pianist's painful labors over the little "Countess-ballet," until in the full swing of their friendship Gesa took the thing in hand and finished it for him. And now? *Could* de Stern have developed into a composer of any importance? He examines his violin part with feverish curiosity, but it contains more rests than notes.

The day of the second rehearsal arrived. Gesa had intended to report himself ill again, but a feeling of breathless anxiety that he could not explain urged him to the music hall. This time it was not the friend of Rossini and the piano teacher alone who had come to hear the rehearsal. The foremost dilettante of Brussels crowded around the stage, all the musical ladies in society sat together in the front rows of the parquet. There was a fever of curiosity and expectation. At the same time that sort of opposition made itself felt which attends upon all novelties that have been immoderately praised.

"*Il parait que c'est epatant*"--said the Count de Sylva, a gentleman who was resting from the fatigues of a laborious diplomatic career, and employed all the time not absorbed by his social duties in studying the violincello. "Epatant," he repeated, walking up to the ladies, "I must confess I do not esteem de Stern's talent for composition so very highly."

"Nor I either, most decidedly," growled the friend of Rossini. "How he ever contrived to write the 'Satan,' I cannot understand. But that it is a masterpiece is not to be denied. These melodies!--they tyrannize over me! they creep into every nerve, they creep into the blood! Spectres walk abroad in this music!"

"It is true that great powers require time to ripen," observed Prince L----, "wonderful children seldom come to anything. You may perhaps remember such a case, ladies--the little gypsy whom de Stern brought to us one evening."

"Hm--a little hunch back in a braided jacket?" asked a lady.

"No--no--that was another--this was a handsome youth from the Rue Ravestein."

None of the ladies remembered. "What of him?" they asked.

"Nothing remarkable. I only cited him apropos of wonder children. Never have I heard finer improvisation than his and what has come of it?" At this moment there was a slight stir, de Stern stepped upon the platform. They clapped applause, they bowed before him, they pressed his hands.

He stood at the conductor's desk and let his eye run over his musical forces--they were all there. Suddenly he turned pale, the baton sank at his side, he longed to flee, the eyes of his aristocratic friends were shining all around him; he rapped on the desk, and the bombastic introduction to "Satan" sounded through the hall.

There was disappointed shrugging of shoulders in the audience. Gesa von Zuylen's mouth showed deep mocking corners. Slowly, painfully, but with increasing confidence he raised his eyes to the director's face, the face that had once been to him as the countenance of a god. He smiled bitterly.

And now the Alto is singing her first song. The audience rouses up as if from an electric shock--and listens amazed, but none listens with such intentness as Gesa von Zuylen.

A strange, strange feeling trembles through him, the feeling of warm young delight, of joyful intoxication with which he wrote that song. Indignation had no chance to be heard, so mighty is the bliss of hearing his own work. It is as if some one had given him back his lost soul. The applause grows louder and louder. As if in a dream he plays on, sometimes he shrinks when some blatant interlude of de Stern's disfigures his own composition.

"Now comes the most beautiful of all," they whisper in the audience, "the duet of the

Outcasts."

In mournful lament are heard the exile's voices, softly, lightly floating, the violin's Angel song mingles with theirs, above, around them, whispering memories of joys forever lost.

Gesa listens--listens--his bow stops, he sees the little green chamber, the smiling friend at the old spinet, and beside him the lovely maiden, her hands clasped in one another, her delicate head slightly bent toward the shoulder, as if it were grown too heavy. "Nessun maggior dolore," he murmurs. The whole audience shouts. The orchestra applauds standing--the amateurs crowd round the stage. But there!--what is this? Panting, breathless, foam on his lips, rage in his eyes, the violinist presses forward through the ranks of the orchestra, up to the director.

"Wretch! Murderer!" he shrieks and strikes him with his bow across the face, then sinks unconscious to the floor. De Sterny passes a hand across his brow, and while the violinist is being carried out, he turns to the capelmeister, who is hurrying up and says with that practiced presence of mind which teaches a man of the world heroism on the scaffold.

"A sudden attack of delirium tremens. You really might have taken pains to spare me such a painful scene!"

The rehearsal proceeded. Gesa was taken home. As soon as he recovered consciousness he sought in all the closets and chests for the original score of his "Inferno" of which he had lent a copy to de Sterny. He never found the manuscript. All he discovered were the disconnected parts of his unfinished opera.

## XIX

Between the Boulevard exterieur, "Boulevard des Crimes" as the popular voice has named it, and the Buttes Montmartre, stretches a quarter of Paris which is behind the Rue Ravestein in remoteness from the world, but far surpasses it in wretchedness. No mournful redeemer here stretches out his crucified arms to mankind, as if he would say: "I would have warmed you all in my bosom, but you have nailed my hands fast!"

No colored church windows glimmer changefully here, amidst misery and depravity. The old Montmartre church is broken up,--they are building on the new one!

In a temporary wooden tower on the Buttes Montmartre, hangs a shrill bell that sounds like the bell of a railroad or a factory, and at certain hours of the day, it tinkles a little despairing Catholicism down into the empty republican clatter below.

One junk shop crowds another here, and wooden booths full of second-hand rubbish and guarded mostly by poodle dogs stand in the wind.

One thing is especially noticeable in the Faubourg Montmartre. Every article one buys there is handed to him wrapped in old drawings, old manuscripts, or old copied music. On everything lies the mould and dust of defunct artist existences, and the debris of fallen air castles. The countless miserable lodgings swarm with young artists who never will accomplish anything, with old ones who never have accomplished anything. Against a background of impudent vice and grumbling poverty are drawn the relaxed figures of enthusiasts weary into death.

In his "*petits poems en prose*," Bandelaire described three people sinking from fatigue, yet without revolting against their burdens, carrying on their backs three enormous, grinning chimeras, whose claws are fastened in their patient shoulders. Every artist in the Faubourg Montmartre bears his chimera. His burden holds him upright; when that disappears he disappears with it. Whole troops of pretentious non-geniuses are to be met there, but also here and there among these eccentric jack fools, a really great, although long ruined artist nature making its last attempt to live and writing its name with trembling hand in the dust. There they dream, and peer across to the Boulevard, the high road of fortune, listening and waiting, with the vigor-and reason-devouring hope of the gambler.

\* \* \* \* \*

One morning a man climbed up to the humblest lodging of Rue de Steinkerque in the

Faubourg Montmartre; Gesa von Zuylen. He had come to Paris partly to escape from the Rue Ravestein, and partly because Paris is supposed to be the California of artists.

A tenor, whom he met on the railroad gave him the address of this lodging; he said it was a place where a man could work.

And Gesa wanted to work! He had a thousand francs in his pocket, the price of an Amati, once presented him by a distinguished patron. The violin was thrown away at a thousand francs. But what of that? He needed money and would have sold the blood from his veins to compass this sojourn in Paris.

He still heard the thundering tribute of applause paid to his work, and saw de Stern's complacent bows. His clenched nails dug into the palms, but he forced himself back to calmness. He would work, he must work, that he might tear away his stolen royal mantle from the shoulders of the traitor! Surely for every genuine talent the hour of triumph strikes at least once in a life time, and he, he was no man of talent, he was a genius! How freely he breathed after that first day after his arrival in Paris. His new acquaintance, the tenor, had asked him "if he would like to take a walk to the real Boulevard." He meant the Boulevard between the New Opera House and the Madeleine. But Gesa shrank from the bustle and confusion--and while the tenor, with the haste of a newly-arrived provincial hurried off into the heart of Paris, Gesa crept slowly up the hill of Montmartre. There was a shabby public garden on the top, with newly set forlorn vegetation, a slippery flight of wooden steps led up to it. Lean, badly nurtured children, not in the least resembling the elves in the Champs Elysées and the Park Monceau, tumbled about in the crowded walks. Behind the garden was some waste land where grass covered with chalky dust stretches up to the doors of some miserable little huts. Paris seemed far away.

He seated himself on a bench. Shrill children's voices, in whose strident tones could already be heard the curse of the factory hand, and the coarse laugh of the paissarde surrounded him. He was deadly tired. In other times he had not even noticed the little journey from Brussels to Paris. His head sank on his breast. He dreamed that he was walking under the sleepy rustling trees of the park in Brussels, Annette Delileo was on his arm. The blue sky mirrored itself in an enormous pool, whereon some red poppy leaves were floating, and he told Annette how that "he was a genius, and was going to do something great."

He felt the tender nestling of her warm young form against him. Suddenly he started up. Little cold fingers touched his, a small girl in a white cap and large blue apron stood beside him, and said--"Monsieur, they are closing the garden."

The Angelus was tinkling through the air as Gesa descended. Damp odors pervaded the slippery hill; great ragged streaks of fog settled slowly down on the wretchedness of Montmartre.

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Once more in his apartment, Gesa made a light, and looked around him, shivering a little at the comfortless room. In the grey marble chimney-place, stood an iron stove. The orange and blue flowers of the carpet had long taken on a uniform covering of dirt. Two offensive terra-cotta images stood on the mantelpiece. The tenor who was well acquainted in the Rue Steinkerque, and had mounted to the lodging with Gesa before, had explained that these were the work of a certain Vaudreuil, a second Michael Angelo, whose genius was broken in pieces against the hard stupidity of the public.

"Genius!" How the misuse of the word angered him! "Genius! The man has no trace even of talent," Gesa had cried, looking at the disgusting figures.

"Si! Si!" rejoined the tenor. "He spent all his means in trying to convert the world to 'high art,' chiseled and *ecce homo*--but what will you have? Marble is dear--he grew melancholy, took to drink--and then--*il a fini par faire cela*."

Whereat Gesa asked shuddering, "What became of him, did he kill himself?"

"No, but he works no longer--his daughter supports him, *vous savez! Les filles d'artistes! cela a quelque chose dans le sang*. At one time he cursed her and turned her out of doors. But he does not remember that any more, he doesn't remember anything any more. So long as he has his warm room, his game of billiards and his glass of absynthe, he is contented. He lives in the Hotel de Nancy, here on the corner. You can make his acquaintance to-morrow if you like. The young artists treat him sometimes, to hear him spout about art,--it is very funny!"

The Michael Angelo of the Hotel de Nancy was the first thing that occurred to Gesa when he returned to his miserable room. His look sought the two terra-cotta statuettes. He examined them with a morbid curiosity. He took one of them and held it close to his dimly burning lamp in order to see it more distinctly. His artist eye recognized in the figure the traces of very great powers gone astray.

A terrible sob unmanned him, the figure shook in his trembling hand. He let it fall and it broke into a thousand pieces. But they did not charge it in his weekly reckoning. It had no value for any one.

\* \* \* \* \*

He drank no longer. A nameless dread clutched his heart; red clouds floated before his vision, a fearful lassitude enervated him--but he drank no more and he worked.

And at first it seemed as if the completion of his opera would be accomplished with perfect ease. He covered piles of music paper with great celerity, and when his power of invention suddenly ceased it did not frighten him, for he remembered that, even in his best days, the inspiration had suffered such moments. He proposed while waiting for a fresh impulse, to polish that which was already written; but when he came to examine it, it was a chaos, which even he himself could not understand. Whole bars were wanting, the accompaniment was perfectly incoherent. Here and there certainly, were places of striking beauty, quite isolated however, like splendid ruins in heaps of rubbish.

Another thing disquieted him. Many of the technical signs of orchestration had escaped him, he could no longer write a regular score. He spent the whole night in looking over a work on composition. Next morning he began his work anew.

To carry out with perfect clearness one miserable little phrase caused him the most painful effort. The faculty of concentration seemed lost to him. But he shirked no pains, no fatigue--"Patience! Patience! It will all come!" he said to himself, and at the same time his tears fell on the paper.

He imposed the most fearful privations upon himself in order to eke out his means to the farthest possible extent. He moved from the orange-yellow room to an attic--he ate once a day.

He grew grey, his hands trembled and he stammered in his speech. The children on the hill, whither he crept, of an afternoon, for air, all knew him and tripped in a friendly way up to the bench where he cowered, muttering to himself, a note-book on his knees, a pencil in his hand, and wished him good-day. He stroked their cheeks, took them on his lap and rejoiced that they were not afraid of him. He would gladly have told them stories--but the words would not come.

One day he brought his violin up to the Buttes Montmartre. Anxious to please the children's taste, he played them little dances. His fingers had grown stiff since he had so suddenly renounced the inspiring indulgence of drink. The bow wavered in his trembling hand. He was ashamed before the children. But for them his playing was exactly right. Soon a large audience had assembled around him. Some of the little people gazed at him with earnest attention, their heads slightly thrown back, their hands clasped behind them--others danced gaily with one another.

This pleased him. He held up his head before the children. He felt as if he would like to improvise; then it seemed to him as if the tune that sprung from under his fingers was strangely familiar--it was the same which he had played nearly thirty years before in the circus on the "Sablon."

And now every day he shuffled with his violin up to the shabby garden. The poor children's applause had become a necessity.

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He grew more and more intimate with the Tenor. The latter, after having been refused at the opera--thanks to a vile conspiracy--had arrived at the practical conviction that this Grand Opera was a decaying institution, with which he would scorn to have any relations, and had accepted an engagement in a café chantant of the Faubourg Montmartre, where he earned a comfortable subsistence.

At first Gesa would not hear of playing anything from his opera to the Tenor, but later, when he began to despair in secret over his work, an urgent desire to confide in some one overcame him. He played for hours to the Tenor after that, on a lamentable old piano, and wheezed the Arias at times, in a ghostly, hollow voice, only for the sake of hearing from some one the assurance, "cela sera superbe!"

Then he would talk himself into an unnatural excitement, his eyes would flash, and he would cry, flourishing his clenched fist in the air--"It has the grand manner, has it not?"

Once he had been so modest!



His means were almost exhausted. He sold his books, his watch. He always treated the Tenor patronizingly, like a dependant--and the Tenor indulged him as one whose mind was weak.

But once, as the two were sitting opposite each other before the fire in the singer's room, the latter said, passing his fingers through his hair, "My dear friend, *ton genie ne te fera pas vivre!*"

Gesa stared gloomily at the speaker.

"Well, well," said the Tenor, hastening to pacify him, "I only mean that the mere inception of such a grand work must require a long time. How would it be if you should occupy yourself a little hereabouts, meanwhile?"

Gesa sighed. "I could compose something small," said he. "Romances, for example."

"Unhappily that would amount to nothing unless you allied yourself with a singer or an actress, who would bring you into fashion. And then--even so it would be a dreadful pity to divert you from your chief end--to fritter you away. No, you ought to seek a place in an orchestra."

"Yes, at the opera," said Gesa, and thought of his stiff fingers with a shudder. However, as he would on no consideration have confessed this infirmity he added, with some embarrassment. "Everything is so complicated there,--so many rehearsals,--one is busy till late at night."

"No!" replied the other, "you should not undertake such absorbing work as that. That would be treason to your muse. I was thinking of a comfortable place in an orchestra that makes no big flourishes and does not rehearse a great deal."

"Well!" muttered Gesa.

"I made the acquaintance lately at the Hotel de Nancy, of a clown, a splendid fellow, who works in a circus on the Boulevard Rochechouart. Not a first-class circus, but a very respectable circus for all that. I told the clown about you. They just happen to need a first violin and"--

Gesa sprang hastily up and left the room. From that moment he never spoke to the Tenor again.

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His lassitude and weakness increased with every day. The blood crept in his veins like cold lead--there was always a mist before his eyes, and in his ears a sound like the flapping of an exhausted butterfly. The miserable nourishment which was all he could afford himself, did not suffice to keep him up any longer, he could not leave his room, then he took to his bed.

Because he was universally liked his fellow lodgers did him all the kindnesses they could, and even the hostess herself brought him food, made his bed, and borrowed newspapers for him. He thanked them all with the same timid smile, the same far-off look, and spent nearly the whole day in a sad, drowsy condition, falling from one light slumber into another.

But one afternoon it seemed to him as if a soft hand passed tenderly over his forehead. He opened his eyes. Above him bent a handsome old face, decently framed in grey hair, and a voice that sounded from the far distance murmured "Gesa!" He roused himself. "Gesa!" she cried again. It was his mother!

Yes, his mother, whom he had not seen for nearly five and twenty years. She had married the acrobat Fernando. The circus on the Boulevard Rochechouart belonged to them--they were prosperous. The light-minded woman was not so bad as one might have thought her. She had kept herself secretly informed about Gesa for a long time after leaving him, and convinced herself that he was well cared for and "among quality people," as she said, and this latter circumstance had deprived her of courage to approach him. But she had often rejoiced at the sight of him from a distance. Then, slowly he disappeared from her horizon. And now the Tenor, Monsieur Augusti, whose acquaintance she had lately made, after talking a great deal of his friend, had only yesterday spoken his name. All this Margaretha imparted to her son, weeping the while, straightening his miserable pillow and smoothed the bed clothes. He suffered it all quietly, murmuring sometimes a grateful word, and observing her, half stupefied, half astray. He could not realize this sudden meeting.

But when she, embarrassed by his passiveness, went on--"I heard you play, years ago,--long years ago,--at Nice. Oh! I was proud of you! And I bought your piece, the one where your picture is on the cover:--such a handsome picture!"--then the violinist buried his face in the pillow and groaned like a dying man. His anguish overcame the shyness which held his mother back--"Poor boy!" she whispered, caressingly, stroking the rough grey hair of the broken man, as in times long past she had smoothed the child's soft locks.

"You must not take your trouble so to heart. I know all, what a great genius you are, and how cruelly the world has used you. We will nurse you well again, and then all will be right. You shall

come to us; we will not disturb you; not one of us; only take care of you. You shall have a little room of your own where you can work as much as you will."

He looked up slowly, a heavy cough shook his sunken breast. The mother passed her arm under his thin shoulders and raised him up a little to ease his breath, his tired head rested on her bosom.

"How fallen away you are," she said, half weeping, "and your poor shirt, all in pieces. Tomorrow I must bring you fresh linen. And now try to take something; you must get strong." And she gave him a cup of broth that she had warmed for him. He did as she bade him, silently,--he even relished the broth. His bitter grief, his deep degradation were forgotten in the feeling of being once more cared for. Drowsy, quiet, lazy contentment overcame him. Dumb, but grateful, he kissed his mother's hand.

Her eyes lighted up. "I must go now," she said. "The ticket-office of the circus opens at six; I must be there. Good-bye. I shall get free about eight and can come to you then. Now you will sleep a little."

She pressed her lips to his temples and disappeared.

The violinist fell asleep. A memory glided into his soul, a long forgotten memory,--not of his dead bride, his faithless friend,--no, a painless memory of his first return to the Rue Ravestein.

A dreamy, narcotic odor hovered around him, and he saw a bunch of brilliant-hued poppies. He heard the light rustle of the dying leaves as they fell on the marble gueridon.--He sprang up. His heart beat as if it would burst his breast.--A nameless terror seized him, as of one who finds himself sinking contentedly into a bog.

He collected himself--he would flee--he would seek death. He seized his clothes,--but the garments slipped from his hands,--he reeled and sank back powerless on his bed. The resignation, the sleepy intoxication of ruined souls, who are grown too weary for despair, mastered him. A dark genius hovered for a moment in the bare attic, the genius of the hopeless. He carried a cluster of red poppies in his hand.

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Days passed, weeks, months. On the Boulevards Rochechouart and Clichy, peopled by artist workers of all kinds, one often meets a tall, elderly man with grey hair, that hangs disorderly about his cheeks.

It is Gesa von Zuylen.

His face is still handsome--but the expression is dull. Sometimes he stops, places his hand to his ear, as if listening to something at a distance. Then he shakes his head, sighs impatiently and goes his way. He lives with his mother, and is treated by her and by his stepfather, and his half-brothers with much deference.

Carefully tended, neatly dressed, and well fed, he does not feel himself unhappy. He enjoys his meals and every one calls him, "Le Raté de Montmartre."

## THE NOBL' ZWILK

## The Nobl' Zwilk

It was in Vienna, in the Ring-Strasse, at the house of Frau Von --- I forget her name, but they used to call her "Madame Necker," because she was married to a banker, thought a great deal of her manners, had a weakness for celebrities, and two *jours fixes* every week. Wednesday was for the *gens d'esprit*, and Friday was for the *gens bêtes*.

It was Wednesday evening, and the salon of "Madame Necker" was almost empty. Excepting her husband, who, to provide against possible misunderstandings, always showed himself there on the clever peoples' day, there was no one present but a celebrated poet, a celebrated poetess, a celebrated orientalist, and a harmless little freethinking idealist, not at all celebrated but much in fashion.

The conversation turned on social prejudices, and the hostess, whose fad for the moment was for belles-lettres pure and simple, and who took no account of aristocracy, could not think of enough scornful words for a certain Frau von Sterzl, who was spending her life in the vain effort to balance a seven-pointed coronet, to which she had no right, on her worried head.

The orientalist looked thoughtful. He was a retired cavalry officer. Some years before he had accompanied a friend to Cairo, and on the strength of that, had sent some articles about the Museum of Bulac to an illustrated journal.

"Not to come of a good family," said he, "is no misfortune and yet, under certain circumstances, it can cause a social discomfort, which those who suffer from, deny, and for which not one of them is consoled."

"This discomfort is shared with so many famous men that I should be inclined to regard it as a distinction," cried the young idealist, with much ardor and little logic, as usual.

"That's as much as to say you would like to be descended from a tailor because Goethe was," said the general, dryly. Not thinking of any answer to this, the young man said "Hem!" and pulled his moustache. "And you would like to wear a hump, because Æsop did," smiled the general.

"My dear general," put in the poet, "what has a hump to do with low birth?"

"Nothing intrinsically, and yet these two things do meet at one point. The first is an imaginary evil, while the other is a positive one; but they are alike in the bad influence which they may exert on the character."

"Oh, general!" laughed the hostess.

"With your permission," he went on, "I will tell you a story to illustrate my paradox, which I see you don't accept at present: a very simple story, of something which I witnessed myself."

"We are all ears," simpered the host, and passed a fat hand over the two pomaded cupid's wings, which stuck up on either side his head. "Very interesting, I am sure," said the hostess, in the politely condescending manner of her great prototype. The poet and the poetess made satirical faces, the idealist craned his neck forward, eager to listen.

The general gazed thoughtfully before him for a while, then he began, speaking slowly:

"He went by the name of Zwilk: by rights it was Zwilch; but after he was promoted for some brilliant deed of arms or other, he never called himself anything but Zwilk von Zwi-neck. He liked the title so much that he wrote it on all his books, and bought books that he never read, in order to write it on them.

"No one knew anything about his origin. Sometimes he passed for the son of a crowned head and a dancer. I think he set this story going himself. Sometimes he passed for the son of a sacristan in Reichenhall. He never mentioned his family; he never went home; he received no letters, excepting those which came from comrades in the regiment. Only once did a letter arrive for him, which was plainly not from a brother officer. It was a narrow, greenish, forlorn-looking missive, with the address written zigzag, and the sealing wax spattered all over the cover. They brought it to him in the coffeehouse, and he turned quite red when the waiter presented it 'Ah, yes,' he said, stiffly, through his nose. 'A letter from my old nurse.' Heaven knows why we didn't believe much in that old nurse.

"Whatever Zwilk's origin might have been, his tastes were severely aristocratic. He never would let himself be introduced to a woman unless she belonged in 'Society.'

"Others of the corps recognized his exclusiveness by nicknaming him the 'Countess's Zwilk,' 'the Nobl' Zwilk,' and 'Batiste.' These were not very good jokes, but they never lost their charm for us, and we laughed at them just as much the hundredth time as the first. Zwilk laughed with us: his laugh used to make me nervous; it sounded like a bleat, and seemed to come out of his nose and ears. He was undeniably a handsome man, tall, blonde, broad-shouldered, stiff and slender, with a regular profile and a thick blonde beard.

"He had great success with women: that is, with young widows and elderly pensioners, and the blowsy provincial beauties, to whom, as I said, he would never be presented, but with whom he danced, all the same, at balls in the early morning hours.

"You might think these ladies would consider his pompous impertinence an insult. On the contrary they were greatly impressed by his 'exclusiveness,' and when he waltzed with one of them she talked about it for a fortnight afterward.

"He wore his uniforms too tight, and his cuffs too long, and he used to pull the latter down over his knuckles. Those hands of his were incurably coarse, in spite of all the care they got, and he was always fussing with them. Sometimes he trimmed the flat, uneven nails in public; sometimes he crooked the little fingers with graceful ease. His manners were stiff, and his German was florid, but ungrammatical. He spoke like a dancing master, who, having 'had a great deal to do with society,' feels obliged, for that reason, to pronounce the most teutonic words with a French accent.

"He was at home in danger. Not only did he distinguish himself by reckless bravery in the field, but he showed in duels a cold indifference, which gave him great advantage over those of his opponents, who, though his equals in courage and his superiors in skill, were yet unable wholly to control a certain sentimental nervousness. The superior officers all praised him, for he was able, and he knew how to obey as well as to command. But he was very unpopular with his subordinates, to whom he showed himself extremely harsh, and with whom he never exchanged a joke, or a bit of friendly chat about their families, as the rest of us liked to do.

"As much audacity as he showed in great matters, just so little did he possess in small ones. Nothing could have induced him to tell a prince who said a horse had five legs, that it only had four.

"I am aware that this manner of judging him is retrospective. In those days, while we were in service together it hardly occurred to us, with our Austrian good humor, easy going, and perhaps a little bit superficial, to examine critically him or his failings. If we found him uncongenial, we hardly confessed it among ourselves, still less would we have acknowledged it to a civilian.

"He had one pronounced enemy in the corps, and that was little Toni Truyn, cousin of Count Erich Truyn, the Truyn von Rantschin. Poor Toni! He was the black sheep, the Karl Moor of his distinguished family, and if he never got so far as to turn incendiary and robber-chief, that was from lack of energy and of genius. The requisite number of paternal letters were not wanting.

"His family had a right to lecture Toni, for he had cruelly disappointed all their hopes. Destined from infancy to the Church, he suddenly, in his eighteenth year, developed religious scruples. His family regarded these as a symptom of nervous derangement, arising from too rapid growth, and they sent him to Rome to be scared back into an orthodox frame of mind by the hierarchy. To help matters, they provided him with an Abbé as a traveling companion.

"In less than a month, Toni, having quarreled with his Abbé, was going up and down in Rome, proclaiming his contempt for Popish superstitions, and raving about heathen gods and goddesses like a Renaissance Cardinal. He neither presented himself at the Austrian Embassy, nor sought the customary Papal blessing: he wandered about with mad artist-folk, ate in hostelries, danced extravagantly at models' balls, where he gave the Italian females lessons in Austrian Choreography, which caused them to open their eyes, and ended by falling in love with a market-girl from the Trastevere. When he came home, he brought his Trasteverina along, with the naïve intention of marrying her. His father, not unnaturally declined this connection, Toni had still less mind to the Church, so they put him in the army.

"Found fault with by his superiors, idolized by his subordinates, cordially liked by the rest of us, he remained to the end, a middling officer and a splendid comrade. He rode round-shouldered and was incurably careless about his accoutrements, and because of his harmless cynicism, and his easy-going, half rustic unmannerliness, we christened him the Peasant Count and Farmer Toni.

"There was a legend that his Majesty, one day at a hunt or a race, or some one of those occasions that serve to bring the monarch a little nearer to his subjects, condescended to ask Toni's father, old Count Hugo, 'How is your family, and what are your sons doing?' 'The eldest,' said Count Truyn, 'is serving your Majesty in the Foreign Office, and the second is in the army.' 'He is here,' added the count, looking about for Toni. He discovered him not far off, leaning against a tree, whistling, his hands in his pockets, his cap dragged down over his ears, oblivious of kaisers.

"The old count was so upset by this sight, that he pointed out another man, in a great hurry, and that man happened to be Zwilk. The kaiser asked no more questions, and nothing came of it, but when the peasant-count told us this story afterward, amid shouts of laughter, he added, 'Now you know why I can't bear Zwilk. I envy him his distinction.'

"One hot summer day,--it was in Vienna, and we were riding home from the manœuvres, through a suburb,--in a deserted street, full of sweepings and gamins, smelling of soap boiling and leather curing, Farmer Toni's eyes fell on the dirty sign of a miserable little shop, 'Anton

Zwilch, Tin-man.' Resting one hand on his horse's croup, Toni leaned over, and said with that soft, winning voice of his, which was in such true aristocratic contrast to his rough-and-ready manners, 'Batiste, is that your cousin?' And Zwilk replied with a forced smile, through his nose, 'Non, mon cher, that must be another line. We write our name with a k: Zwilk von Zwiłnek.'

"Next day in Café Daum, the farmer-count perfidiously seized on a general lull in the conversation, and called across several tables to his particular friend. First Lieutenant Schmied.

"Du, Schmied! Is the brewer at Hitzing, a relative of yours?' And the other called back affectedly, 'Non, mon cher, that must be another line, we spell ourselves with an *ie*.'

"This feeble joke was repeated at intervals after that, to the edification of Toni and his friend, and the great embarrassment of all the rest. Zwilk pretended not to hear it.

"About this time our corps was enriched by the arrival of Count Erich Truyn, Toni's cousin. He had got himself exchanged from the Cuirassiers because of some love affair or other. He was blonde, handsome as a picture, chivalrous, aristocrat through and through. Like all the Truyns, excepting Toni, Erich was conservative, even reactionary. Nevertheless, perhaps exactly for that reason, he was most considerate toward people who were less well born than himself. When Toni and Schmied served up their stale joke about 'the other line,' Count Erich always grew restless, and at last, one day when I was present, he remonstrated with his cousin. 'You are really too unfeeling, Toni,' he said. 'How is it possible for you to jeer at a poor devil who can't help his extraction, and no doubt has to suffer enough from it. Look here--I--Hm--it would annoy me very much to have this go any further, but I have heard that poor Zwilk was once a waiter at Lamm.'

"Whatever he was would make no difference if he were a decent man now, but he isn't!' broke out Toni. 'He's a low fellow; heartless canaille!'

"You ought not to speak that way of a comrade,' said Count Erich, much shocked, 'of a man with whom you stand on terms of *Du* and *Du*.'

"I say *Du* to his uniform, not to him,' muttered Toni. Count Erich burst out laughing,--'And I took *you* for a Red!' he cried.

"Soon after this we were sent to Salzburg; there Zwilk saw his best days. He became the intimate friend of Prince Bonbon Liscat, a very limited person, between ourselves, whom they had shoved into the army to keep him occupied, until they could arrange a marriage for him, to provide his line with heirs.

"Spoiled by priests and women, like so many scions of our highest nobility, wrapped in cotton from his birth, nurtured in arrogance, Prince Liscat as a child could never endure the equally pampered arrogance of his young peers, and always chose his playmates from among the toadies and fags. Now, true to this taste of his youth, he liked no company so well as that of Zwilk. Zwilk must dine with him, must drive with him, Zwilk must accompany him on the piano while he poured forth elegies on the French horn,--on the tortoise-shell comb, for anything I know.

"As for Zwilk, he existed for Bonbon: he bathed in aromatic vinegar like Bonbon: he went to confession; he abused the liberal journals; he raved about Salvioni's legs, all like Bonbon. He acquired a complete aristocratic jargon, talking of 'Bougays,' 'Table *do*,' and 'Orchestra.' Prince Liscat was the last to correct him. It would have been quite too revolutionary for Zwilk to pronounce French as well as he did himself.

"Zwilk's Bonbon had an ancient uncle, Prince Schirmberg, who lived in a curious old rococo Chateau, about an hour out of Salzburg. He was a bachelor, once very gay, now very pious; the first in accordance with family tradition, the latter from fear of future punishment. He suffered from spinal complaint, and, being paralyzed in both legs, he spent his time between a rolling chair and a landau. Before the latter walked four large cream-colored steeds, in slow solemnity, as if it was a funeral.

"All the cab drivers and private coachmen reined in as soon as they overtook the serene equipage, and fell behind, the whole cavalcade then proceeding at a snail's pace. It would never do to pass the prince, and it would never do to stir up the princely cream colors by a too lively example, lest evil befall the princely spinal column.

"Only Toni Truyn wickedly rushed past now and then, at the full speed of his thoroughbreds. Then the big cream colors before the old-fashioned landau would give an excited jump or two, and poor Prince Schirmberg would call out, 'Damn that Truyn!'

"His serene highness certainly hated Toni, who returned it with good-natured contempt and a number of bad jokes. Some one came and told Prince Schirmberg that Toni had said he was nothing but a bundle of prejudices done up in old parchment. This the prince took very ill, without in the least understanding it. 'Prejudice,' he knew, from reading the 'Neue Freie Presse' was the liberal word for principles: and 'Parchment' was simply an aristocratic kind of leather.

"The prince had a sister, Auguste. All the little girl babies in Salzburg were named after her. We used to call her the May-Beetle, because she had a little head and a broad, round back, and always dressed in a black cap and a frock of Carmelite brown.

"She occupied herself with heraldry and charity. That is, she painted the Schirmberg coat-of-arms on every object that would hold it, and she engaged all their evening visitors, who were not playing whist with her brother, in cutting little strips of paper to stuff hospital pillows. For their reward she used to have them served at ten o'clock with weak tea and hard biscuits, but, as even the best families in Salzburg still keep up the barbarous custom of dining at one o'clock, the guests found their supper rather meagre.

"When she wanted to give them a special treat, she read to them in a thin voice out of an old Chronicle about the deeds of the Schrimbergs.

"She had a marked weakness for Zwilk. He cut papers with enthusiasm: he listened to the Chronicles with ecstasy: he fell on one knee to kiss her hand when she graciously extended it at leave-taking.

"It was Sylvester Day, in the yard of the Riding School. The cold winter sun fell dazzlingly on the hard, white snow. Long, strangely twisted icicles hung from the snow-covered roofs, against the gloomy sides of the buildings which surrounded the court.

"We had given our recruits a good dressing down in the Riding School, and now we were standing about in little groups chatting, cheerful and hungry, in the cold court. I heard Erich Truyn behind me, speaking in that polite, pleasant tone which he kept especially for poor country priests, and scared women of the lower classes. He was saying, 'I'm sorry, but First Lieutenant Zwilch is engaged at present. Shall I send for him?' I turned round. There in the old, grey archway stood handsome Truyn, blonde, slender, careless, easy, correct without pedantry; from head to foot what a cavalier ought to be. Beside him, square, clumsy, tufts of grey hair over his ears, a grey beard under his chin, face mottled red and blue from the cold, mouth and eyes surrounded by fine wrinkles, cheeks rough and seamed like the shell of an English walnut,—an old man, a stranger.

"He wore very poor clothes, half town, half country make, a short sheepskin, high boots, from which green worsted stockings protruded, a long faded scarf with a grey fringe twisted round his neck. He had a little bundle tied up in a red handkerchief squeezed under one arm, and he was kneading nervously in his two hands a shabby old fur cap, as he looked up with an expression half frightened, half confiding to Count Erich.

"That usually so self-possessed young gentleman was much embarrassed, and was making visible efforts to hide it, while he strove at the same time to encourage the old stranger.

"'Shall I send for him?' he asked a second time. 'Oh! please, I can wait, please,'—stammered the old man in his *gemüthlich* Upper-Austrian dialect.

"I took him for a small mechanic; he was too diffident for a peasant, and not shabby enough for a day laborer.

"'I can wait,' he repeated. 'Have already waited, long, very long, Herr Lieutenant.'

"'As you will, but won't you sit down?' said Erich, hesitating, divided between fear of giving the old man a cold, and fear of not showing him proper attention.

"Right and left of me our comrades were chatting. 'Sylvester,' cried Schmied, 'it's the stupidest day of the year. It makes me think of punch, and cakes, and cousins.'

"'It makes me think of my tailor and my governor,' laughed Farmer Toni.

"The peasant-count was sitting on a bale of hay: Schmied stood over against him, leaning on the side of a forage wagon. Toni wore a short white riding coat; his chin was in his hands, his elbows were on his knees.

"'To the first I owe a bill,' he went on, 'And to the latter I owe congratulations. Schmied, do you think he'd be satisfied with "Best Wishes for the New Year," on a card?'

"'Are you going to Schirmberg's to-night?' asked another officer coming up.

"'Must,' said Toni, laconically. 'And you?'

"'I don't know. Perhaps I can plead another engagement. It will be deadly dull at Schirmberg's.'

"'I hear they are going to serve champagne and a prince of the blood,' said Schmied.

"'Hello! What's old Gusti up to?' laughed Toni: 'Big soirées are not in her line.'

"'It's all for Zwilk,' answered Schmied. 'You know he is going to be made adjutant to Prince Schirmberg.'

"'Adjutant to a prince!' It was the old stranger who cried out, proud, excited, turning his head from one to the other.

"Erich had continued to do the honors with all the courtesy of your true aristocrat to the plebeian who has not as yet stretched out a hand toward any of his prerogatives. The little old man had grown quite confiding: he looked up now in Erich's face and asked, 'You know him well?'

"'He is my comrade,' answered Truyn. 'I wish I could call myself as admirable an officer as he is. He is one of the best in the service, and he has a brilliant career before him.'

"Truyn liked Zwilk as little as the rest of us, but he wanted to give the old man pleasure, and that he could do without falsehood.

"The stranger stripped off his mittens, and put his knuckles to his wet eyes.

"'I thank you, I thank you,' he sobbed like a child. 'He's my son. I wanted to see him, long, long, but he was so far away and he never could come home,--but he wrote,--such beautiful letters. The priest, himself, couldn't beat them; and,--and--now, I was going to surprise him, but--will he--will he like it, Herr Lieutenant, after all? Look you,--I'm afraid,--he such a grand gentleman, and I--'

"Zwilk's voice sounded from within, hard and merciless, rating a common soldier: then he walked into the yard.

"Arm in arm with Prince Liscat, varnished, laced, buckled, strapped, affected and arrogant, one hand on his moustache, he simpered through his teeth:

"'You're much too good, Bonbon. You don't know how to treat the *canaille*. The Pleb must be trodden on, else he will grow up over our heads.'

"Then his eyes met those of the old stranger. He turned deathly pale; the old man shook in every limb. Handsome Truyn, very red in the face, stammered:

"'Your father has come to see you: it gives me much pleasure to make his acquaintance,' or some well-meant awkwardness of that kind.

"But Zwilk smiled, his upper lip drawing tight under his nose, showing his teeth, large, square and white, like piano keys.

"'Der papa?' he simpered, elegantly, looking all over the court, as if searching for him; then, as the old man, stretching out his trembling hands, 'Loisl!' Zwilk fixed him with a cold stare and said, 'I don't know the man; he must be crazy.'

"Ashamed, confused, the stranger let fall his hands; he caught his breath, then looking anxiously from one to the other of us, he stammered:

"'It is not my son. I was mistaken: a very grand gentleman. Not my son.'

"'Never mind,' strutted Zwilk, and clapped him jovially on the shoulder. 'There, drink my health,' and he reached him a silver gulden.

"The old man took it with an indescribable, hesitating gesture; looked again in a scared way around on us all, lifted his eyes sadly, as if begging forgiveness, to the face of the Nobl' Zwilk, and turned away, repeating, 'Not my son!'

"He was blind with grief. He struck against the sharp corner of the stone gatepost, recoiled, felt about with his hands for support, and disappeared.

"We were dumb. There came the ring of a coin on the pavement without, a half-choked sob, then nothing more.

"'Dost thou dine at the Austrian Court to-day?' inquired Zwilk, with cheerful effrontery of his friend Bonbon, whose arm he took.

"Farmer Toni hawked and spat slowly and deliberately at Zwilk's feet, but Zwilk had the presence of mind not to see it, and left the place on Liscat's arm, still smiling.

"We looked at each other. Count Erich's eyes were full of tears. Schmied's fists were clenched, and his lip trembled. All of us felt a tightness in our throat. We longed to rush after the disowned man; to surround him with respectful attentions; to pour out kind words and consolation,--if we could have found consolation. But it was one of those moments when fine feeling lays a restraining hand on sympathy, and we pass the sufferer blindly by, not daring even to uncover our heads.

"In the square before the barracks, a silver gulden sparkled on the pavement in the cold winter sun.

"New Year had come in when the party broke up at Prince Schirmberg's, and we rode homeward by a narrow, snow-covered path across the fields, a short cut, by which the heavy equipages of the other guests could not follow us.

"The soirée had been a great success. The prince of the blood had shown himself, as usual, all affability, and Zwilk, warmly recommended to favor, had been graciously distinguished by His Royal Highness.

"The slightly faded Countess Schnick had looked very pretty. Zwilk had been courting her since autumn, and to-night she had been very encouraging to the future adjutant of Prince Schirmberg. And Zwilk, after the departure of His Royal Highness, had beamed and twinkled, and shone as if varnished all over with good fortune, patronizing everybody, even his friend Bonbon. Now he rode, sunk in pleasant reveries, a little apart from us, at the head of our cavalcade.

"The moon shone clear. Sown with countless stars, the sky blue and cloudless arched above an endless expanse of snow. Everything around us was of a blinding whiteness, an unearthly purity, and still as death. Only now and again, at long intervals, a light shudder trembled through the silence, a swift rushing, a deep sigh,--then once more silence.

"'It is a parting soul,' said Erich Truyn, listening, much moved. Erich was a little superstitious.

"'Nonsense,' grumbled Schmied, 'it is a tree letting fall its burden of snow.'

"'Everything is so strangely pure, one is afraid of meeting an angel,' said Toni.

"'Yes, it makes one ashamed of being a man,' muttered Schmied. Then we all ceased talking. We thought of home. The New Year's night, so still and peaceful, brought us all memories of long-forgotten childhood. Presently Schmied spoke out in his deep bass voice, to Toni.

"'I must see if I can't get leave and give my old governor a surprise for Twelfth Night. He's awfully pleased when Hopeful turns up.'

"'Wish I could say the same of my Herr Papa,' sighed Toni. 'But it's all up in that quarter. I'm simply a lightning rod for him. When his steward bothers him, he sits down and writes me an abusive letter. But it's partly my own fault,' he added, regretfully.

"Count Erich, who had lost his father shortly before, looked straight ahead, his brows meeting, his eyes winking unsteadily.

"Proudly the Nobl' Zwilk rode at the head of our little troop, rocking himself in dreams of gratified vanity. All at once his horse reared, so violently and unexpectedly that he was thrown. He kept hold of the bridle, and was back in the saddle next moment, punishing his horse furiously, and cursing so loud that Schmied, who rode nearest him, called out 'Restrain yourself': and pointed to a small wayside shrine, on the edge of the path. It held an image of the Virgin, and a half extinguished lamp, burning dimly before it, sent a red ray into the blue white of the moonbeams.

"Then, on the spot where Zwilk's horse had shied, Schmied's Gaudeamus began to back and tremble, to our amazement, for Schmied's horses were reputed as phlegmatic as their master. Next Truyn's Coquette jumped to one side, and Toni's Lucretia began swinging herself backward and forward like a wooden rocking horse.

"'I think the brutes have entered into a conspiracy to make us stop here and say our prayers,' said Toni. But Schmied sprang down.

"'What is it?' we called. 'Some one frozen,' he answered. 'Perhaps some one drunk,' lisped Prince Liscat. Erich and his cousin with the rest of us were already dismounted. Two sleepy grooms held our horses.

"There on the chapel steps, crouched a human form, in the attitude of one who has fled to God with a great burden.

"We stretched him out on the snow. His limbs cracked gruesomely. His hands were hard as stone: he must have been dead for hours. The cold moon shone on his face. It was old and wrinkled, the frost of frozen tears glimmered on his cheeks and around his mouth. The dead drawn mouth kept the expression of weeping.

"'It's the poor devil who came to us yesterday morning in the Riding-School,' said Erich, and bowed his head reverently.

"'Better so,' muttered Schmied, in a shaky voice. 'Better for him.' The little peasant-count kneeled in the snow, rubbing the stiff hands and sobbing.

"'We had better take ourselves off. We can't do any good here, and there will be trouble with the police.'



"It was Zwikl who spoke, standing by with white, strangely smiling face: his voice was hoarse and hurried.

"Then Toni sprang to his feet. 'You hound!' he cried, and struck him across the face with a riding-whip."

The speaker paused a few seconds, then went on quietly.

"Of course Zwikl left the army. He and Toni fought with pistols. Zwikl came off extremely well, and Toni extremely ill, being badly wounded in the hip. He lay in bed six months, but during that time he was reconciled to his family, and shortly after he got well he married a pretty little cousin. He lives in the country, overseeing an estate of his father's. He has grown steady, has a great many children and preserves the most touching affection for his old comrades.

"We gave the poor old stranger a grand funeral, which the whole officer's corps attended. We buried him in St. Peter's Churchyard, and put him up a fine monument.

"The Nobl' Zwikl vanished utterly. For a long time I expected to see him turn up as a fencingmaster somewhere. But far from it: I ran across him lately in Venice, married to a rich widow from Odessa. His servants call him Eccellenza; things prosper with him."

The old general paused, and looked about him. He had told his story in a voice of much feeling, and now he evidently looked for some signs of sympathy.

The celebrated poet remarked, with a grin, that the story would make a good subject for a comedy, if you changed the ending a little. The celebrated poetess said she didn't feel much interest in stories that hadn't any love in them. The hostess inquired if the widow whom Zwikl married was a person of good reputation. The host remarked that that was what came of letting the rabble into the same regiment with respectable people.

Only the youthful idealist had been so much moved that he was afraid to speak for fear of showing it. But at last he pulled himself together and broke out with these enigmatical words--

"After all, it's our own fault."

"How do you mean?" asked the hostess.

He blushed and stammered. "I mean, that if there were no Prince Liscat, there would be no Nobl' Zwikl."

## **WHAT HAPPENED TO HOLY SAINT PANCRAS OF EVOLO**

**[What Happened to Holy Saint Pancras of Evolo](#)**

"Down with him! Into the sea with the old pig-head! Let him come to reason among the crabs and cuttle-fish! Now he touches water,--now he swims,--now he goes under! There, Evoluccio, may you find it cool and pleasant!"

He who made all this shouting and ranting was the little broad-shouldered Cesare Agresta, ship-trader, and he stood in the midst of a noisy crowd on the outermost edge of the cliffs which descend steeply to the sea before Evolo. They who moved about with turbulent cries, and still more turbulent behavior, among the gnarled olive trees on the rocks where the old chapel stands, were his fellow citizens, the entire population of the little Sicilian town of Roccastretta--men and women, children and aged people, rich and poor, even including the reverend Padre Atanasio, and the equally reverend Syndic. These two, withdrawn a few steps apart, watched the crowd's activity with a curiously sly expression of mischievous amusement.

Around the stem of an ancient olive tree some handy, half-naked fellows had slung a thick rope, whose length reached over the rocks down to the sea, and which, with many tugs and jerks, as if attached to a heavy, uneven weight that pitched about, made the old trunk shake from lowest root to topmost branch. Don Cesare held the chief command over this tumultuous mob. He ran, he gesticulated, he ordered, he swore, he laughed, he blustered, and they all obeyed him to the letter.

"Just why little Don Cesare exerts himself so much about it I can't make out," said the well-nourished padre, in his neighbor's ear. "The old Evolino, or, as they call him in despite to-day, Evoluccio, has never done any harm to Don Cesare. It must be all one to him whether it rains or not, since he doesn't possess the smallest bit of land, and not one single lemon tree can he call his property."

The Syndic shrugged his shoulders like a man at loss for an answer, and said, slightly nodding toward a youthful pair, half hidden behind the chapel, who seemed to be excellent company for one another:

"While Don Cesare bestows his attention upon the old, his pretty sister occupies herself with the young."

"I have long remarked that there was something between those two," said the padre with a half envious side glance, in which rebellion, contending in the heart's depths with resignation, was plainly manifest; "but what will come of it? The wealthy Nino will never content himself with the sister of a ship-trader."

"Nay, Father Atanasio, one need not always be thinking of marriage," answered the other, smiling slyly on the stout padre.

"I know that very well," replied the holy man, without taking the least offence at the Syndic's light-mindedness; "but if it comes to Don Cesare's knowledge, let Nino beware of his knife."

"That is Nino's business. Between my neighbor's door and its hinge I never put my fingers," cried the Syndic with a laugh.

They were interrupted by the crowd streaming back from the cliffs toward the chapel.

"This pleases you. Father Atanasio," cried a lank sailor, who looked out from beneath his Calabrian cap like a bandit. "You never were on good terms with the old Evoluccio. Well, he's fixed for one while!"

"He'll stay down there till he gets reasonable," said another, shaking his fist at the sea; "and if that won't do,--something else will!"

"Yes, yes!" howled a third; "if water fails he shall feel fire. Only that Don Cesare talked us down to-day, we'd have built a blaze under the old one's feet that would have made him remember us forever! The villain! the lump! the old heathen!"

At these words, a little smile, like a flash, shimmered in the eye of Father Atanasio, but it was very brief, and remarked by no one; then he said, slowly, waving his hand to those who were passing, and clothing his words in an unctuous sort of conciliatory chant:

"That is enough. It will certainly work this time. Malicious the Evolino never was. He only needs to have his old memory jogged a bit. If you were as old as he you would forget too, sometimes."

Then the bystanders all broke into loud laughter, and cried to each other:

"The padre is always right The Evoluccio is an old fellow--older than any of us can think--and one must be considerate with age."

"Carmela! Carmela!" suddenly sounded from the midst of the confused throng descending the side of the cliff toward the little town; and from his higher point of observation the padre saw Don Cesare's short figure powerfully fighting against the stream of people, and remarked with

edification how he stretched his neck, how he jumped off his little legs, and stood on his little toes, making strenuous efforts to climb the hill again, or, at least to look over the heads of his fellow citizens. "Carmela," he cried, "where are you?" But Carmela appeared to have just reached a highly interesting clause of her conversation with the smart and enterprising Nino, who was pushing his suit gaily with the listening girl.

"See," he said, pointing to where, close at the foot of the promontory a country house lay hidden among the groves of lemon trees, "yonder is my Casina. Last year I inherited it, and now in a few days it will be all ready to live in. How pretty it looks! Everything new, and ready for daily life. And it is so cool and pleasant sitting there on a hot summer evening, with the fresh, silvery spring that trickles out of the rock into an old Greek marble basin; it is a stone from the temple, you know, that used to stand here, with images of gods, and wonderful animals. Only come there with me, and see how much pleasanter it is than in the dark street under your window."

The pretty girl's look followed his gesture. She shaded her eyes with her hand, and a rosy smile rested on her delicately cut mouth.

"Oh, yes," she said, half aloud, to herself, "it may well be cool and pleasant there."

Then she heard her brother's voice.

"I am coming," she cried; and, hastily turning to Nino, "shall I see you this evening at the usual hour?"

"Yes, if you will promise to come out here with me."

"Yes, yes," she cried, hastily, and ran away toward the others, who were descending the hill. Nino stroked his slender moustache, and a mocking little smile shot from his eyes after the pretty girl who had so thoughtlessly thrown him this momentous promise.

When Padre Atanasio found himself alone by the chapel under the olive trees he walked with much deliberation to the edge of the cliff and looked over; a most peculiar, condoling, bantering smile hovered on his lips, as his glance fell on the rope, and glided down to the place where it plunged into the sea. Down there, several feet deep under water, dashed over by the foaming waves, floated something heavy, that looked like a human body--a helpless lump, which the waves tossed hither and thither, and across which the fish, like silver arrows, shot back and forth in lightning darts. Occasionally the thing would bounce against a rock, roll back on itself, and then resume its regular motion in the water. If the dashing of the waves ceased for a little, and a sunbeam fell upon the clear flood, one could have sworn that a corpse was floating there--the corpse of an old man with snow-white hair and beard, in a faded red-brown mantle; the rope was knotted strongly around his hips, and his arms were closely bound by it also. He lay there, the poor old man, stretched out stiffly, and let the waves drive him, and Padre Atanasio looked down at him so queerly, and queer sounded the words which the holy man threw him over his shoulder at parting:

"Serves you rights Evoluccio! What? You wanted to keep up a sinful competition with the blessed Mother of God? You must have the finest presents, the handsomest wax candles, the gayest festivals! And what is there so extraordinary about you, then? You're nothing but a half-converted old heathen!"

But the poor old man with the snow-white beard and hair, and the red-brown mantle, over whom the jolly fishes were swimming, was not a murderer's victim; he was not even a corpse; he was not even a poor old man. He was nothing more nor less than the especial patron saint of the little town and surrounding country. Holy Saint Pancras of Evolo--the Evolino, as the people were accustomed, after their familiar fashion, to call him for short--the Evoluccio, as they injuriously named him when his conduct didn't please them.

The good saint might well have wondered what had happened to him on that fine spring morning, when the entire population of Roccastretta broke into his sanctuary on the Promontory of Evolo, tore him from his pedestal, carried him out from the cool twilight of his chapel into the glaring day, tied a rope around his body, dragged him, amid the most intolerable cursing and abuse, to the edge of the rocks, and pitched him over, like a dead cat, into the sea.

Hardly two days before, all Roccastretta had assembled in his chapel, and words of the most passionate devotion had risen like a cloud of grateful incense to the niche in whose depths he had made his dwelling for more years than any one there could count.

"Holy Pancrazio of Evolo, dear good Saint Pancras," prayed this pious people, "you love us like children and we love you like a father. Every Sunday we bring you fragrant nosegays, and when, as at present, the burning drought kills our flowers, then we bring bunches of gold and silver tinsel, and thick yellow wax candles to light before your image. Father Atanasio, who never honored you as he ought, and always calls you a half-converted heathen, he is of opinion that we give his Madonna nothing but miserable tallow dips, and keep the best of everything for you. So, you see, best, dearest Evolino, that we don't grudge you anything, and our children shall be just like us; for you are our own, only honored patron saint. Only, now, bethink you of your office, dearest, kindest Evolino. For three months not a drop of rain has fallen on our fields, trees, vines.

Look around you! The figs are drying up, the olives will not swell, the wheat fields look like a desert. If you don't send rain, Evolino, it is all over with our harvest, and nothing will be left for your people but to save themselves from starvation by catching fishes and crabs. Be good, then, holy Saint Pancras, and send rain. You know very well it is not a tempest we want, but a good, long, mild, soaking rain, such as you know how to send when you will. To-morrow, or next day, at the latest. Do this for us, dear Saint Pancras, and you know how we will deck your image beautifully, and honor you above all the other saints; yes, even before the blessed Madonna herself, who is such a busy Queen of Heaven and Earth that she has no time to think about our little place. But you, Evolino, belong to us alone, and have no one else to look after! Care for us then, dearest Evolino, and we will bless you to all eternity."

Thus they prayed and besought him, and the ancient Evolino in his niche listened without stirring an eye or a hand, as became a saint that was cut out of wood, and plastered over with paint; and presently they all trooped out and locked the door, leaving the honest old fellow to his dreams in the cool, cozy chapel. Long and many were the Christian years that he had stood up here in the sanctuary of Evolo; but his dim confused remembrance looked wistfully back into the twilight of a still older time. There was a shrine here then, too--not a chapel, but a temple; other priests came and went before his image, other songs were sung and other gods were honored. The ancient sculpture had hewn him out of stout knotty wood, and beneath the various crusts deposited by the lapse of centuries, the old image was still hidden, as it came from that hand, now long moldering in dust; defaced, however, by strange gaudy daubs of color, with a red mantle, over a blue tunic, silver-white beard and hair, cherry-red lips, black brows in two even arches above the neatly painted eyes, and a round saintly nimbus, behind his head, that glistened as if he had a pure gold sailor's hat on the nape of his neck. Truly he didn't look like that in the old times, yet they honored him then much as he was honored now, not like one of the high mighty ones, who are only to be addressed with fear and trembling; like a dear old friend rather, with whom a man can exchange the familiar "thee and thou"--older, certainly, and doubtless of higher degree, but who has dwelled so long in our midst that he seems like one of our own people. This feeling increased with the lapse of years, and a most confidential relation had sprung up between the patron saint and his flock--a relation of mutual service and mutual indulgence, as of friendly neighbors who like to do each other a brotherly good turn when they can.

It was Saint Pancras' duty to take care of the little town, and its surrounding country; but the honest patron was so old and brittle, that no one could blame him if his head was not always in the right place, and his thoughts sometimes went wool gathering, so the weakness of age was helped for Evolino by various friendly hints; if that had no effect, the duties of a patron saint were set before him seriously but kindly; if this did not serve, then the standpoint was made clear in coarse but unmistakable fashion,--and thus it happened that on this fine spring morning, after he had failed to supply the longed-for rain, in spite of prayers and entreaties, he was lowered at the end of a rope into the sea, like a common malefactor, for his punishment and his reformation.

And so he lay down there at the end of his rope, and saw how the crowd, when their work was accomplished, took the way to the town, and saw how Padre Atanasio, who hated him for a dangerous rival, in the bottom of his heart, wept crocodile tears over him, and then he saw how his chapel stood above among the olive trees, lonely and forsaken, and how the open door swung to and fro in the wind,--and he may have turned back in his dim memory to that fair, long past time when the warm sea-winds blew through the breezy colonnades, when the bright sunbeams played over his youthful godlike figure, when he looked down from his pedestal upon the coast, the purple sea, and the high-beaked ships with their great oars. Then, when he was a young god, when they brought grapes and figs, and pomegranates to lay at his feet! Gayer than now sounded the songs of the priests, and lustily streamed up the clouds of incense from the golden vessels. He was not Saint Pancras of Evolo then, yet it was under a very similar sounding name that he was honored by the believing crowd, and none then would have dared to snatch from his pedestal the beautiful God of the Winds, and throw him down among the fibrous polyps, a mock for women and children.

In dull, humming tones sang these ancient, half-smothered memories through his drowsy thoughts, and duller, and still further off, were the voices of the noisy folk, who had just left him, and in crisp softly-splashing wavelets the eternal sea, like a tender mother with her sleeping child, rocked holy Saint Pancras of Evolo.

## II

Father Atanasio could not explain satisfactorily to his own mind why Don Cesare had been

able to work himself into such a violent rage against the poor Saint Pancras, and with every one whom he came across on the way home, and with every one whom he encountered during the day on the street, or in the wine-shop, he began the subject over again.

"I can understand very well," said the father, to his devoutly-attentive listeners--"I understand perfectly--that you, Don Ciccio, and you, Don Pasquale, and you, Don Geronimo, and many others, are angry in your hearts with our patron saint. You need rain, you need it as mankind needs air, and fishes water. That is to say, your fields need it, your lemon trees, figs, pomegranates, olives, and almond plantations. You are landed people, you cultivate your acres, and wet them with the sweat of your brows. But the sweat of your brows, ha-ha-ha! That is only a dewdrop or two, and won't answer instead of rain." Here the father laughed, and all the others laughed at their priest's joke.

"Well, then, if your patron forgets his duty, and neglects to send the rain"--

"He doesn't want to send it!" cried one.

"Whether he doesn't want to, or whether he forgets it, that I don't know--I am not at liberty to discuss the question since you credit me with an evil-disposed jealousy toward the good old St. Pancras. Well, then, never mind that; I know what I know. But what was I going to say? Oh, yes, if you, being injured in your property through your patron saint's--let us say, carelessness--if you show him in your way--which--well--your way is--I don't know exactly what to call it."

"It's the way to deal with him," they shouted from every side. "We know him. Praying is no good unless we discipline him too. This isn't the first time. Fifty years ago our fathers had to do the same thing, and he had not been three days under water before it rained. It's his old heathenish obstinacy that must be broken now and then."

Father Atanasio turned right and left, behind, before, defending himself from the pelting of angry words, with hands and feet, his head wagging from side to side, hands and shoulders raised protestingly; after a while, when they let him speak once more, he was quite breathless, as if it were he who had been raging and shouting.

"Be peaceable, I beg," he gasped. "I know well that you understand this matter better than I. It is nothing to me. I only have to read mass in church before the blessed Madonna, and your Saint Pancras and his chapel do not belong to my parish. But this is not what I wanted to talk about. What I would say is: Don Cesare owns neither a tree nor a blade of grass. It is all one to him if it rains or shines. He is a ship-trader. What has he to do with rain? And yet it was Don Cesare who took the saint from his pedestal and carried him down to the rocks. He it was who slung the rope over the olive tree, and let Evolino down into the water. And Don Cesare is a wise man, the wisest of us--of you all. He knows what he does, and why he does it; and therefore I, Father Atanasio, say something is wrong--something is hidden that must be revealed."

In vain did the bystanders, charmed by Don Censure's heroic deed, seek to make the father understand that the little ship-trader had simply shared the feelings of his fellow tradesmen; that he had not acted from personal motives, and it was exactly this unselfishness which deserved to be admired and respected. All these explanations and assurances rebounded from the father's sceptical smile without effect.

"My dear friends," said the stout, smiling father, "I know you and all your kin. You were all hatched out of the same shell. Unselfishness? We will seek that elsewhere. When it comes into your heads to praise a fellow creature for his unselfishness it is because you somehow find it to your own advantage. And Don Cesare, above all others, is far too wise to be unselfish. He had his sufficient reasons for letting himself be compromised with Saint Pancras, like the rest of you. Yes, Don Ciccio, compromised you are, thoroughly, and if I were the Evolino, Santo Diav--that is, I would say. Holy Madonna--I know what I would do. However, that is not the question. I was talking of Don Cesare. He knows on which side his bread is buttered, and how to squeeze in time out of a tight place. He will set himself right with Saint Pancras, take care of his own interests, and leave you all sitting in the mire, never doubt it. Cesare Agresta, the clever trader, will look after his own advantage."

The padre was not far wrong, for Don Cesare was a stirring, driving, scheming little man; and as to the present question, it was certainly true that, in the morning, when he took the saint down from his pedestal and carried him, like a baby, out of the chapel, he had whispered lightly, quite lightly, so that no one else could hear: "Don't be angry, dear Pancrazio. What I do I must do. I will make it up to you." Certainly no one heard this, not even Father Atanasio, although he was standing close by, and looking on with silent, malicious delight, while they made life so hard for the Holy Madonna's hated rival; and still less was it observed by the bystanders, for the face which Don Cesare made didn't match his words at all, and whoever had seen him at that moment must have said to himself: "Poor St. Pancras! it's lucky you are made of wood; for if alive you were, alive you would never come out of the hands of this raving maniac, with the glaring eyes and bristling hair."

Quite another face, the most unconcerned face in the world, was that with which, toward evening of the same day, Don Cesare, in the gathering twilight, walked into the room where his sister sat sewing by the flickering, smoking tallow candle; and, with the most indifferent tone in

the world, he said to the girl looking up at him with the most unconcerned as well as the handsomest and brightest of black eyes: "Close up the house with care, Carmela. I am going to Salvatore's, and shall not return till late."

At the door he turned and added: "And, Carmela, I may as well say, take care of your eyes, little Mouse; they are remarkably bright these days. And, you know, I would be well pleased with Nino, but he must take you before the altar. If he will not do that--tell him from me--then let him keep away from you, or it may be the worse for him. Good-night, little Mouse!"

Whereupon Carmela, demurely bending her head over her work, replied:

"Go on, Cesare, and be easy. Carmela comes from good stock."

She was from the same stock as her brother, at any rate, for she added, in exactly the same tone as that in which Don Cesare has whispered to the saint:

"That Nino shall marry Carmela and none other will scarcely be accomplished by your aid, Cesare. I must see to that."

Her eyes sparkled over her work, as if she knew very well indeed what she was thinking about. And she did, too, the petite witch, with the fine finger tips, and the raven black curly hair; for her brother was no sooner out of the house than she sprang up lightly, ran to the door, drew the bolt, and then stepped softly, softly, to a window that opened on the street, stuck her little head through a narrow opening, and looked quietly after Don Cesare for a while, then, when she had seen him disappear through the darkness in the direction of Salvatore's house, she threw the window wide open, leaned out, laid her right hand above her eyes, and gazed steadily in the opposite direction, as if searching for something in the thick gloom. She found what she was looking for very soon. It appeared in the shape of a young, slender man, who kept himself in the shadow of the houses, cautiously and noiselessly approached the window, and suddenly stood before her, grasping her hands in his, and whispering:

"I have waited long. I have kept my word. Will you keep yours, Carmela?"

Cesare's small house lay at the outermost end of a little street that led to the harbor. Whoever came up that way was certain not to be seen by any one, and that was exactly the way the young man had come. The night was dark. The moon was yet far below the horizon. It was easy to chat quietly and unobserved between window and street, and this the two did. They were far past the rudimentary stage of love-making, for Carmela promptly resigned her hand to the caresses of Nino, who confidently pressed upon it a long, passionate kiss.

"Only come this evening with me to my Casina," he whispered; "we can be alone there, and we can't go on forever talking from window to street like this."

Carmela smiled under cover of the night.

"It is so far," said she; "if my brother should come back before I"--

"You will be home long before your brother. The way is very short along the shore, under the Promontory of Evolo."

"It is too far, Nino; the moon will rise soon, and then we shall be discovered."

They talked together a long time. The moon rose, and poured its peaceful light into the gloomy streets; but only for a little while, then the sky darkened again, and black clouds rose slowly from the west.

"See," laughed Nino, "the holy Pancrazio is getting tired of his bath. And see, too, Carmela, he favors our love. He is hiding the clear moonlight. Will you come now? Come then!"

She hesitated a moment Then she whispered. "Wait, I will fetch my mantle," and disappeared.

While the pair were holding their rendezvous before Don Cesare's house, that worthy was proceeding to his, after another fashion. At a leisurely pace, as if addressed to an evening's gossip with a friend, he had slowly departed down the street, never doubting that Carmela would look after him; all girls did so, and his sister was like the others, of course. Women were women, he opined, smiling quietly to himself; one must treat them like children, pretend immense confidence, but be mighty vigilant, and always preserve one's masculine independence. This he certainly did, and carried out his theory with much precision by making a sudden turn the moment a bend in the road hid him from Carmela, and starting off at an amazing gait in the opposite direction. First he took a side circuit through the crooked little streets, and then hurried off toward the Promontory of Evolo.

There must have been something extraordinary in the busy little man's brain, for he ran as fast as his short legs would let him. Tali Ciccio, whom he met outside the ruined gate of the town, looking for Heaven knows what in that lonely place, he never once noticed; on the contrary, when he saw him from a distance, he seized the blue hood which every one on the coast of Sicily wears winter and summer, in sun, wind, and rain, fastened Bedouin fashion around his neck, and drew

it far over his face, raised his broad shoulders, and sunk his head between them. He passed his astonished fellow citizen without looking around, and the latter stood gazing after him, and muttered: "The devil knows who that is, and where he is going;--I know every one in Roccastretta, but I never saw *him* before;" and shook his head after him for a long while, like an honest member of society who has met with something to reflect upon.

Don Cesare, meantime, hurried on, smiling slyly to himself. "By you, my stupid Ciccio, I, Don Cesare, am not going to let myself be overreached. What you are doing at this hour outside the town Heaven knows. Some sort of love adventure, perhaps. Or have you been stealing fruits and grain, and hiding them somewhere in a ruinous cassine? Or are you engaged in smuggling? Saints have mercy on us! who could thrive at smuggling these days, when not a ship runs into our harbor? For three months, exactly as long as the rain has failed, not a sail has this poor deserted harbor looked upon. Smuggling! Yes, that business paid once on a time, but not now."

And the honest Don Cesare thought, with satisfaction, of that happy time when, at least twice every month, a foreign sailing vessel came in his way. What pleasant times! And now, for three long months, he had stood day after day near the chapel of Evolo, which he now saw before him on the heights above, and he had looked with his trusty spyglass in all four quarters of the heavens to see if he could not discover a white sail making for the harbor of Roccastretta, and showing the well-known flag of Norway, or of England, or of Germany. From thence came the vessels which supplied themselves in this vicinity with southern fruits, olive oil, sulphur, and pumice stone, and brought hither various things which Don Cesare secretly purchased for little money and sold again for much--tobacco and cigars, woolen and cotton goods, gay ribbons, gaudily-painted saints, and freshly-varnished Madonnas, apostles, evangelists, and all sorts of wares, for which the customhouse inspectors were especially greedy. These Don Cesare understood how to convey into his house without discovery, and undiscovered to sell afterward at a comfortable profit. Close by his house, tied to an old broken pile, year in and year out, his boat lay ready, and when a sail appeared in the distance, he was the first to row out and offer his assistance to the captain; for he could jabber a mixture of every known tongue with the greatest fluency, and the ship had not come to anchor before Don Cesare was the confidential friend of every one and the trusted adviser of the whole crew. Yes, insignificant as he was in figure, Don Cesare was an enterprising fellow, and had his head in the right place; and that thick, round skull, covered with close-cut hair, with big, prominent, ring-bedecked ears, and wide mouth stretched in an everlasting smile, was stuffed full of stratagems and trader's tricks that brought him many a pretty sum, and at which the honest foreign sailors did not complain; for, without Don Cesare's help, they must have paid far dearer, and how did it cheat them that he made a hundred per cent, on the fiery wine which he furnished them, and that he obtained their fruits and meal and fresh meat from his neighbors at a ridiculously low price? Oh, those good honest people! They paid so willingly whatever he asked; they found everything so cheap in this beautiful land; and when the ship was once more under sail they all thanked him who went away, and those who remained, they thanked him, too, for they all had done a good business; but he had done better than any one! Yes, pleasant time! thought Don Cesare, as he wandered along through the night and looked out on the black sailless sea. Directly before him lay the Promontory of Evolo, with its old olive trees. The chapel showed clearly through the darkness; last year they had whitewashed it, to the honor of the saint who now lay in the water. Don Cesare shook his head. "You poor, dear Evolino, what must you think of me, that I could help them treat you so? And yet, you know as well as I do, how much good it would have done for me to interfere. If I had opposed them they would, maybe, have used you far worse; and that, instead of water, you did not have to stand the scorching fire, you may thank me. Sometimes one serves a friend better by howling with the wolves than letting himself be torn to pieces by them in his friend's company. Only wait. I will make it all right, good Evolino."

He had arrived at the foot of the Promontory. The little path wound off among the rocks. A few steps further and it turned to the left, toward the other side of the cliffs where Nino's country house lay silently hid in thick groves of orange and lemon.

Don Cesare stood still. Suddenly a puff of wind passed over the water which foamed up to his feet.

"Oh, oh!" said the little ship-trader, "from the west! The wind for rain! No, dear San Pancrazio, you will not be so obliging to those people who threw you into the water?"

Then he looked cautiously on every side, listened carefully to right and left, and believing himself secure stepped down to the shore where he knew the saint lay, felt around among the stones till he found the rope, and then one might have seen the little man, slowly pulling the line toward him, with the exertion of his whole strength. But the holy Pancrazio didn't come so easily. One arm stuck on a sharp rock, his halo got caught between two stones, and when there came a hard pull it seemed as if something cracked in poor Saint Pancras' ancient worm-eaten neck, and as if a very critical wabbling seized his old heathen head.

"Ei, ei!" the poor saint must have thought, "how careless these human beings are with their saints! First one is tied and thrown in the water, and then knocked to pieces against the stones, for some one is pulling the rope I see. What is *he* going to do with me?"

And the shiny varnished eyes of Evolino tried to recognize the man, and when he found that it was Don Cesare, he sighed in his wooden bosom, but he patiently resigned himself to his fate.

Only the wabbling of his head made him anxious; for he liked his old head. Suppose he should lose it, and they should put him on a new one?--a new head on the old trunk! or if they should order a whole new saint from the best modern wood-carver, what would become then of him, the only real, true, ancient, genuine San Pancrazio of Evolo?

But Don Cesare pulled and pulled, and turned and twisted, and at last, there lay the saint at his feet on the dry sand.

"Now, God be gracious to you, poor Evolino!" thought that ill-used person. What then was his surprise, when Don Cesare, without speaking a word, dragged him across the footpath, set him carefully up in a cleft of the rock, brushed and cleaned him from slime and dirt, and dropping on his knees, with folded hands, thus addressed him:

"There you are again on dry land, dear, good, holy Pancrazio, and are rescued from the neighborhood of sea-crabs and polyps. And, do you see, me, me alone, you have to thank for it, Don Cesare, who loves and honors you! I told you so when I was bringing you down from the chapel. The others have treated you shockingly, poor patron, but I, I rescued you. Don't forget it, dear old San Pancrazio. Now I know well enough what you would say: Don Cesare! Don Cesare! you were there too, and slung the rope over the olive tree! Alas, yes! I had to be there! But only think what would have happened if I had not been there, those others were in such a rage with you!--on account of the rain! But what do I care about the rain? You may leave them for weeks longer without rain for all I care! they deserve it, and that tall, lean Ciccio, whom I just met outside the walls, he it was who blustered most shockingly about fire, and I it was who silenced him by slinging you into the water. Yes, Evolino, and it is I again who drew you out. And now, Evolino, be good to me, you who are also an ancient God of the Winds. Weren't you called Æolus before you became the Saint of Evolo? Surely you have not forgotten that,--and the winds will certainly listen to you still. Blow, then, a good strong wind into the sails of a foreign ship and guide it to our harbor, so that I may earn something once more! See, I am not a rich man"--

He broke off suddenly. A clear, white beam of light had fallen upon the saint and a strange smile seemed to play over his features. Don Cesare looked around him in fright But it was only the moon that had just risen from the ocean, and threw its first beams upon the image.

"It is clearing," said Don Cesare, as he rose, and brushed the sand from his knees. "I must go now, for you understand, Evolino, only you alone know that I have drawn you out of the sea. Now stand quietly, and dry yourself, and get over your fright. But don't forget that you have me to thank, me alone! and don't forget to send me the ship--soon! very soon! Then I will dress your altar, and you shall have a new halo."

He stopped again in his discourse; for suddenly the image grew dark. What was that? a cloud? rain? He looked around. In the west it had grown black and heavy from the horizon up. "West wind?" said Don Cesare. "Rain wind?--yes. But a favorable wind for ships that come from the ocean into the Mediterranean. San Pancrazio, San Pancrazio--only remember me!" He clambered slowly up the steep path, that led between rubble, sharp-pointed cactus and aloes, to the chapel, but on the way he often paused and looked around to see if any gleam of white sail flashed across the blackness of the waves; for now he knew certainly that Evolino had listened to him, and once the wind came to blowing, the ships could not long fail. Thicker and thicker the huge clouds massed themselves on the horizon. When he reached the top he sat down under an olive tree to take breath. In the distance he thought he heard a noise. Was it a ship in whose cordage the wind whistled its song, and which was hastening to the protecting harbor? "Then Carmela may wait till I come home," murmured Don Cesare. "I shall stay up here." And, his eye immovably fixed on the water, Don Cesare remained sitting under his olive tree.

Not from the sea, however, did the sound come which held the listening trader spellbound on his lookout. With her narrow mantle drawn far over her face, glancing on every side, secretly trembling from fear and joy, Carmela ran beside Nino along the shore, jumped, with a beating heart, from stone to stone, and at every noise that reached her ears from the sea or the dark lemon trees, she clung closer and faster to her companion.

"It is too far," she whispered, and already repented that she had listened to his persistent entreaties, and left the safe walls of her own home to follow him on this dangerous expedition.

"Calm yourself, child," answered Nino; "it is not a hundred steps further, and your brother will not return before midnight--to-day especially, they will have so much to tell about the fate of San Pancrazio--and meanwhile we will tell other stories yonder in my cozy Casina."

"Oh, Nino, it frightens me. Why did we not stay and chat at my window? The street is so lonesome. Let us turn back. Really it is not right for me."

"What are you saying, Carmela? The street lonesome? Oh, yes, and suppose that old Francisca, your servant, looks out of the window on a sudden, and sets all the dogs on the midnight marauder, as she did last time? In my Casina there is nothing of that kind to dread. We shall be alone there, and we have never been alone together yet since we plighted our love to one another."

Carmela stood still.



"Nino," she said, "you risk nothing; but I risk everything. If any one should find me here--or yonder."

"Who should find you?" broke in Nino. "No one wanders around out here at this hour, and you are as safe as"--

She started suddenly, shrank back, and laid her hand, with an impetuous gesture, on his mouth. They were standing directly in front of the Promontory, where its outermost point juts forth and descends sheer to the sea, and where the path crowds narrowly between this rocky wall and the water.

"What is it?" asked Nino, softly.

"Yonder!" whispered Carmela, and her finger pointed through the night to a rock close by the path, where, silent and motionless. *One* stood.

"Santo Diavolo!" muttered Nino, darkly, to himself, and all his Sicilian jealousy rushed like flame to his head. Hastily bending down, he picked up a sharp heavy stone, and, without turning his eye from the mysterious figure, he added, hastily: "The way is watched. Here is the path that leads up to the chapel. Quick, Carmela, before he sees us."

By this time the rushing wind had driven the heavy clouds high up into the zenith. Suddenly, through a rift, a beam of bright moonlight fell upon the rocks. A wild scream broke from the girl, staring with wide eyes at the motionless figure.

"The saint!" she cried, and held out her arms as if in self-defence against the fearful sight. "The saint! ascended from the sea! Blessed Madonna, protect me!" And, without knowing what she did, as if fleeing from Divine judgment, she rushed up the path to the chapel in breathless haste.

At first Nino was as if spellbound at the unexpected and, even for him, mysteriously terrible vision.

"San Pancrazio!" came brokenly from his lips. But when he heard his beloved's cry, and saw her fleeing through the darkness as if bereft of reason, then the wild blind rage of the Sicilian whose love is threatened seized him.

"Santo Diavolo, accursed saint, you shall pay for this!" he screamed, fiercely, and at the same moment the stone flew, sent by a strong, young hand, toward the Evolino. Nino watched it go, strike; then something solid and heavy rolled, with a dull sound, over the rocks. "May you smash your heathen skull to pieces on the cliffs, old idol!" cried Nino to the tottering saint, and followed his beloved. "Carmela!" he called, without regard to the danger of being heard and discovered. "Carmela, stop! What are you doing?"

But Carmela rushed on like a frightened deer, over stones and roots of trees, whither she knew not, what she sought she could not have told. She fled, in order to flee--fled from the image of the threatening saint, who had appeared in the white shimmering moonlight, as a messenger of God, with the rod of avenging justice in his hand, or perhaps as a guardian angel set in the way of temptation and destruction.

She did not hear Nino's shouts, and she was deaf also to another voice that suddenly called her name. As if all the lost souls from perdition were at her heels, she flew up the cliff's side, and ran under the old olive trees to the chapel.

"Carmela! Carmela!" shouted Nino, following close in breathless haste; a gust of wind swung open the door of the deserted sanctuary; like a child seeking its father's protection, Carmela sprang within; close behind her followed Nino, and at the same moment, propelled by a powerful hand, the door fell to with a loud bang; a hasty rattling followed, and from the fast-made lock some one drew out the key.

Don Cesare it was who stood before the chapel, motionless, the key in his hand, his eyes fastened on the door. Convulsively his hand sought his knife, and he muttered a few half-stifled words. He stood there a long time, seemingly in violent conflict with himself, and as if he strove in vain for a decision. At last he seemed to find what he sought.

"You won't escape me," he said to himself, and shoved the key into his pocket; and after another pause he added: "Herein I recognize thy hand, holy Pancrazio."

He clambered hurriedly down the path to the cliff once more, and a very grim smile indeed passed over his face, for a saying which Father Atanasio loved to bring into his sermons came suddenly, he could not tell how, into his head--about ancient Saul, and how he went forth to seek his she ass. Had he not also, like Saul, found something better than he sought? The bold Nino was in his power. The blood shot up into his head. He almost turned back to the chapel, but he was master of his own will, and let the knife go again. The thieving villain! He had taken advantage of his absence to chatter, Heaven knew what, misleading nonsense in his favorite sister's ears, and had enticed her out of the house onto that lonely path. She had fled before him, but yet she had followed him. And now the two were sitting up there, caught, behind lock and

bolt, and he, Don Cesare, held the key in his hand, and, except as true and honorable husband of Carmela, that rascal should never come out of the chapel. And now Don Cesare laughed aloud, and said:

"Whom have you to thank for this, Don Cesare? Whom but the good, dear Evolino, whom you drew out of the water with your own hand--to whom you will go now, this moment, and, throwing yourself on your knees, will"--

Hold! what was that? Evolino was no longer standing in the rocky niche, and what did he see? Yonder he lay across the path; and, holy Madonna! without a head! and in his breast a gaping wound, as if something had crushed in poor Evolino's worm-eaten side. Don Cesare looked all around. There lay the stone. Now he understood it all. Nino must have thrown it at the saint when Carmela's scream startled him; yes, yes, and now Evolino was revenging himself. He had hunted the two into his chapel, and delivered the key into Don Cesare's hand! And see! there lay the head. It had rolled close to the shore; but ah! in what a condition it was, and what a change in Evolino's countenance! There was the strangest mixture of godlike, cheerful youth, and shrivelled old age, the shape, the forehead, the crown, the chin, were those of a youth, but there were painted wrinkles on them, and scars had engraved themselves deep in the old wood, and close beside these deep seams which time had made in the once youthful face, the gaudy new varnished colors showed like rouge on the face of a dead boy. Don Cesare felt quite overcome by the sight. "Evolino! San Pancrazio!" said he, half aloud to the head, which he held in his trembling hand. "Evolino, is it you? or, is it not you? I don't know you any longer--and yet I know you well, poor old friend!"

And with great fervor, as if he were carrying something very sacred, he bore the head of San Pancrazio to where his body lay, raised the latter from the ground, set it once more in the rocky niche, and carefully laid the mutilated, unrecognizable head in the crossed arms, then he kneeled on the sharp stones, folded his hands, and thanked his patron in a prayer of much devoutness, for the favor which he had shown him that day. He prayed a long time, and did not mark how the clouds lowered ever nearer on land and sea--did not mark how the wind swept cooler and cooler over the rocks. Not until the soft raindrops wet his arms and shoulders did he arouse from his pious devotion.

"Evolino--dear Evolino!" said he silently to himself. "It is you who put this into my head; you who led me hither, and in your hands I leave the fortunes of my house. Rule it as seems best to you. To-morrow you will find me at your chapel, ready for anything; for atonement, and bridal rejoicing, or for a bloody avenging of my injured honor."

As he said this, he drew the key slowly out of his pocket, hung it on one of the saint's hands, as if it were a hook, kissed Evolino's robe once more in humble confidence, and departed with strong, rapid steps through the night.

### III

Next day, in the early morning, there was a great stir, calling, laughing, and rejoicing in the little town of Roccastretta. Men, in Capuchin-like hoods, stood in the doors, women wrapped in their mantles, leaned out of the windows; and from one house to another, and one street to another, the laughing dialogue ran: "Ha, ha! what did we say yesterday?" "He has come to reason over night!" "Only since yesterday he has lain in the sea, and last evening he sent the rain!"

"And what a heavenly rain!"

"Yes, yes, the Evolino is a brave patron, we could not ask a better."

As Father Atanasio, who, any one could see, didn't know what sort of a face to put upon the matter, slowly crossed the large open square where the men were accustomed to idle about when they had no work to do, all sorts of taunting salutations flew at his head:

"Oh, oh! Father Atanasio, but it *did* help!" The father, who was a discreet man, assumed an open, cheerful expression, returned the greetings of his fellow townsmen with pompous nods and smiles, and answered unctuously:

"No one ever addresses himself to the saints in vain: and even if this time it was done after a rude fashion, Saint Pancras loves this town and people too well to resent it. Besides, good for evil is the rule of the saints."

"Very fine; yes, yes!" came back from the mocking house doors and windows, "we know you are obliged to talk that way; but we know just as well that the 'rude fashion' was necessary, and long live Don Cesare, who put it into our heads!"

"And who saved you from putting the good Evolino to the test of fire?" answered the little ship-trader, with a loud voice, as he came out of a side street, and advanced toward his friends, receiving the praises and congratulations that poured upon him from every side with dignified self-approval, as if it were he, and not Saint Pancras, who had wrapped the horizon in clouds, and caused the fruitful rain to descend over fields and gardens. A quite extraordinary seriousness pervaded his features and demeanor; he spoke with calm majesty, as his distinguished namesake might have done after a victory over the Gauls. But whoever had observed him closely could not have failed to detect the feverish wandering of his glance, and a certain convulsive movement that now and then overcame his right hand, causing it, without visible occasion, to clutch itself into a fist, and to lay hasty hold on the handle of his knife.

Only for a short time did Don Cesare feast upon the enthusiasm of his fellow citizens. Turning toward Father Atanasio, he suddenly cried:

"And now, friends, not another moment's delay! Not an hour longer must our good patron saint remain in the water. He has heard us, sooner than we hoped, and we must be equally prompt in assuring him of our gratitude, and in replacing him with all honor in his chapel. Come, Father Atanasio, and call the Syndic also, for whoever helped yesterday must help to-day, if he would not have the saint bear him a grudge!"

The wisdom of Don Cesare's words was obvious, even to Father Atanasio and the Syndic;-- though as to the latter, he never ventured to wish for anything until the majority had first willed it; --and thus the whole community set forth once more for the Promontory of Evolo, in spite of wind and rain, feet in the wet sand, hands in pockets, cowls and gay kerchiefs over their heads and necks. Don Cesare opened the procession, between the Syndic and the priest.

"Where is your little sister Carmela?" asked the latter, after a while, smiling cunningly, and glancing aside at his neighbor.

"Oh, father, I am not anxious about her," answered Don Cesare; "she was on her feet early this morning, and gave me no peace trying to catch the rain in her hands. A real child."

"Yes, yes," said the padre, politely; "Carmela is a fine girl, and pretty. Nay, that is nothing to me, but others have remarked the same. It would be a joy to me, Don Cesare, if I could see the two before the altar. I speak of Nino, Don Cesare, who is courting her as if she were the only girl in Sicily."

Behind the amiable tone in which these words were spoken, lay hidden a quiet laugh at the thrust he delighted in being able to give his neighbor. But the little ship-trader did not appear to notice it, and replied quite seriously:

"And that will soon happen, Father Atanasio. In the chapel above they will be betrothed before the image of the good Evolino."

His two comrades stared at him in astonishment.

"Nay, nay, my good Don Cesare," said the Syndic, "I would gladly see it too, but Nino seems to us a little bit too rich."

Don Cesare caught him up quickly: "I thought so myself yesterday."

"And what has happened since yesterday?" asked the amazed padre.

"I may tell you now, my excellent Father Atanasio," answered Don Cesare, and a knavish smile might have been seen to flash for one instant from his eyes: "Yesterday, when we let down the good Evolino from the rocks into the sea, everybody was crying for rain! rain! What was the rain to me? I shouted with them because I wished them well, but as for me, in the depths of my heart I asked for something quite different."

"So, so!" said Father Atanasio, and poked the Syndic in the side behind Don Cesare's back. He looked triumphantly around at those who followed, winked at them with pompous, victorious eyes, and seemed suddenly to grow a head taller than all the others, in the consciousness of possessing such penetrating power of divining the hidden secrets of the human breast.

"Yes, that is allowed to every one," continued Don Cesare, "and look! the good Evolino has fulfilled the others' wish, and so I think to myself; yours, too, will be fulfilled, Don Cesare, for there is not one in the whole community that treats him as well as I do."

He thought about the foreign ships all the time he was speaking, and gave a hasty glance toward the horizon, but nothing was to be seen there, and he was forced to confine his hopes and longings to Carmela and Nino. They had arrived at the foot of the promontory.

"I think we will remain below," said the Syndic; "the rope will be hard to draw from the cliff,

and, besides, some harm might easily happen to the saint."

No one made any objection to this wise precaution, and on they went over the steep path, in a long single file, as a flock of geese marches, one behind the other--first the Syndic, then the padre, then Don Cesare, then the rest. The rocks had grown very slippery from the wet; every time a cowed figure lost footing and tumbled, more or less ridiculously, into the sand, or caught at a neighbor's arm, or dress, or leg, then arose a great laughing and screaming, and so the whole company by degrees was brought into the best possible humor and unanimity of mind.

Suddenly the procession came to a stop. The Syndic had turned pale as chalk, and stood rooted to the ground. They could see his fat cheeks shake, and his knees tremble, and were uncertain whether it was the strong wind, or a terrible fright that made his hair rise up and stand stiffly out all round his head.

"Holy Madonna!" they heard him gasp; "holy Madonna!"

"What is it? what is the matter?" they cried from every side, crowding forward, and pitching over the rocks and through the water. But they one and all stiffened with horror when they saw Saint Pancras, whom they had thrown into the sea the day before, standing in the hollow of the rocks, and, oh, fearful sight! holding his head in his arms! and, oh, inconceivable miracle! the key of his chapel which they had left in the door, now hung from the saint's finger!

Dumb from terror, old and young, men and women, remained as if spellbound; cold shivers ran down their backs; they pressed closer together, every hand made the sign of the cross on forehead and breast at the same moment, every mouth murmured the prayer to the blessed Madonna.

Even the wily Don Cesare, who had very distinct information concerning the history of this miracle, felt himself agitated and overcome by the general consternation; he, too, felt his knees knock together and his blood congeal, and he made the sign of the cross and muttered, without hypocrisy, "Holy Madonna, protect us!"

Father Atanasio was the first to venture forward, as belonged to his office. Trembling in every limb, he pushed the Syndic aside, advanced with hands raised and eyes directed toward heaven, to the headless saint and sank, shaking, upon his knees, his example followed by the whole company. His eyes at first sought the place where saints and men are generally accustomed to carry their heads; there his glance found nothing but the grewsome wooden stump, out of which ragged splinters were sticking up in place of a neck, and, shuddering. Father Atanasio lowered his gaze to Evolino's breast, where the head lay on the crossed arms. But a new terror overcame him when he beheld the wild strange alteration of that countenance, and he had to support himself with both hands on the earth in order not to fall forward as if stunned by a blow. But the others thought their padre was engaged in fervent devotion, and muttered their litanies with lowered eyes and increased zeal.

"San Pancrazio, dear, only Evolino," prayed the sly Don Cesare, in the silence of his heart, "now remember me, and send Father Atanasio a lucky thought. Don't forget that my little sister is up there in your chapel with that cursed hound Nino; and, dear Evolino, send this wanton coxcomb Nino a lucky thought, too, lest something unlucky befall this day!"

Thinking, hearing, and the sending of lucky thoughts were perhaps a trifle more difficult to the poor beheaded saint than formerly, when he was whole, at any rate it was a long time before Father Atanasio awoke from his stupor. But all at once it seemed as if a bright beam of light fell upon his mind, and he gathered himself together.

"I understand the sign," murmured he, kissing the saint's feet; "be thou blessed forever, San Pancrazio of Evolo."

Then he rose, turned to the anxiously-gazing crowd, spread out his arms, and said:

"The saint has worked a miracle upon us. A miracle hath he wrought upon himself. The long-desired rain he sent us by night, and he has ascended, victorious over human devices, from the sea in which you had sunk him, and here he stands, as a saint should, upon dry ground. And behold him! for a sign that henceforth a new and a purer tie exists between the patron and his people; with his own hands he has taken from his shoulders that ancient heathen head, which he formerly wore to your harm, and in defiance of the blessed Madonna. And as a sign of that which he requires from you he has brought down the key of his chapel and hung it on his finger, that you shall set up a new image for him there; that you may know the old Evolino, as you have been wont to call him, in remembrance of past times, dies to-day and a new San Pancrazio enters into his place, a true and blessed saint, who will love and protect you, and will never more allow the old heathen who hides under these venerable garments to afflict your town and fields with drought, bad harvests, and deadly pestilence."

Thus spake the honest father. The Syndic nodded applause, and Don Cesare, of course, did the same. Then the saint was lifted with careful hands and laid on the shoulders of several stout fellows; but the head Father Atanasio placed with solemn importance in Don Cesare's hands; then, holding the chapel key aloft in his own right hand, he led the procession, which slowly and in deep silence moved toward the heights above and the little sanctuary under the olive trees.

There was a couple there already, who had passed a bad night. Like one bereft of reason, Carmela had thrown herself on the earth before the altar.

"The saint! the saint!" sobbed the girl wildly. "It was he; he called my name. I saw him as he came sweeping up the steep precipice. He followed me; his halo streamed angry light through the darkness. Holy Mother of God, I beseech thee defend and forgive thy sinful child!"

Nino tried in vain to quiet her.

"No," she cried, pushing him from her, as he sought to raise her from the ground, "I followed you on an evil path, Nino; the saint has warned us, and he will punish us. Did you not hear how he threw the door to behind us? Nino, Nino, there is but one atonement--that you acknowledge me as your true and honorable wife before this altar."

Nino faltered. The image of San Pancrazio stood before his own eyes, and he could not shut it out. He, too, felt a tremor in his very soul, for, however secure and sceptical he might represent himself, in the depths of his consciousness there always remained the inherited fear of the unknown--the secret dread of heaven and hell. In his heightened pulse-beats, which he could distinctly hear, this feeling knocked loudly at his heart.

A close, sultry air filled the chapel. Through the one little round window over the altar a dusky glimmer fell, scarce brighter than the surrounding darkness. Nino reached up and tried the door. He wanted to open it, to let in the fresh night air, to scare away the fantasies which were slowly surrounding his senses. But the door lay fast in bolt and hinge and would not yield to his straining. He sought the latch with groping fingers, and found that the key had been turned and drawn out.

"Santo Diavolo!" he cried, ice-cold shivers running through every limb. "The door is locked!"

"Locked, yes, locked," cried Carmela, springing from her knees, and throwing herself on the threshold. "I saw him, how he followed at our heels, and how he raised his hand with threatening gesture. Yes, I heard him, and I saw him, and it is he who has locked us in his sanctuary, that our deed may be expiated."

Thus the poor child raved in feverish terror. Nino listened without a word. What should he do? What would come of all this? It was no use to think of flight. The old stones lay fast one upon another, and fast lay the old oaken doors on their hinges. In the morning all Roccastretta would come to replace the saint on his pedestal, for he had sent the rain without a doubt. Nino could hear the big drops pattering against the window-panes. And they would find him here with Carmela. Alone with Carmela in the chapel! And then? When Don Cesare stepped across the threshold? Nino knew Don Cesare and what he had to expect from him. It would be a battle for life and death, and all the men and women, Father Atanasio and the Syndic--every one would be on the side of Carmela's injured brother. Verily this was not the ending he had imagined for his love adventure when he tempted Carmela to follow him to his quiet Casina.

Ever blacker lowered the night, heavier and closer hung the clouds, thicker poured the rain. And as Nino heard the rush of heavy drops on the roof, and felt the moist breath of the drinking earth which came in through the little window, it seemed as if something broke within his heart, and a voice cried from the depths: "Every drop of rain that falls from heaven proclaims the power of the saint, and can you doubt the miracle which he has worked on you?"

Next morning, when the procession, led by Father Atanasio, stopped, with the mutilated image of the patron saint, before his chapel, and when the key entered in the lock, and the lock creaked, and the door, swollen by moisture, turned slowly and heavily on its hinges, there was one there whose heart beat violently, and whose blood boiled at fever heat, one whose hand lay carelessly as if toying but none the less fast and grimly on the handle of his knife--for who could foresee what was going to happen? But Don Cesare breathed more freely, and let his knife go, and with difficulty retained composure enough to play out the *rôle* he had assumed, when the padre stood still on the threshold with a cry of astonishment, while out of the dusk from the foot of the altar two figures advanced, kneeled with clasped hands before the good father, and amid the astounded silence that fell upon them all, Nino's voice was heard saying humbly:

"Saint Pancras has wrought a miracle not on our fields and gardens alone; upon me and upon Carmela in the last night another has fallen. How it happened, ask me not. The saint led us into this chapel with his own hand, with his own hand closed the door and took away the key. At the foot of his altar we have pledged each other our wedded troth, and at the foot of his altar we beg you, Father Atanasio, to bless the banns."

Then the little Don Cesare exulted aloud:

"Ha!" he cried, waving his little hands in the air, "that was what I prayed yesterday of the good, dear Evolino for myself. That was it. Father Atanasio! He gave you rain, and me he gave a brother-in-law. Long live Evolino!"

And in his heart he added something more, which he did not think it necessary to say aloud:

"Evolino," thought he, "you were wiser than I, and led me to a kingdom, when I only looked for

a she ass. The ships will come to the harbor of themselves, but of himself never would this rascal Nino have taken my little sister for his wife."

A few weeks later, when the wedding of Carmela and Nino was celebrated with great pomp in the chapel of Evolo, a new image of the saint stood on the altar, a gay, brand new image, which Don Cesare, with divers other matters, had brought from a foreign ship that lay at anchor in the harbor of Roccastretta, and had placed in the chapel in remembrance of this day of miracles. The old Evolino, however, he claimed for himself, and no one grudged him that worm-eaten and broken relic.

At the foot of the rocks of Evolo, in a cool arbor, searched through by sun, and moonbeams, at the Casina, where Nino and Carmela were to make their home, Don Cesare had set up the image-mended, and decently restored by his own hand. It stood in a niche of stone under a roof of fragrant orange trees, beside the ivy-wreathed Greek marble basin into which the crystal spring of Evolo poured; and almost it seemed as if the Evolino felt himself far more at ease amid these surroundings, near the finely-cut bas-reliefs from his ancient temple, with the free winds sighing around him, than above in his musty chapel. A singular peacefulness seemed to have settled down upon his old head, stripped of beard, and hair, and halo; he looked with Olympian smile upon the youthful pair, gaily pursuing a frolicsome existence at his feet, on this their wedding evening, and a faint spark gleamed in his painted eyes, as Nino, who must have learned some lore of the ancient gods, poured a goblet of fragrant Muscatel upon the ground before him, and laughingly cried:

"To the gods belong the first drops; honor and glory to the gods and the saints!"

When they had all departed, and even Don Cesare had taken leave of him with a friendly, confidential nod, and when at last the Evolino stood alone in the silent moonlight, a soft whisper fell from his lips:

"In spite of all, you feel yourselves drawn back again to the ancient heathen gods, you dear gay heathen folk; and though new names have taken the place of the old ones, in you, my cheerful, good-natured, grown-up children, I recognize my early worshippers once more. In spite of time and change you are they who used to lay fragrant wreaths on the old god's altar, in the pillared temple on the cliff, and singing, and laughing, and shouting, passed their shouting, singing, laughing life away!"

Silently gleaming, the eternal stars beckoned, softly splashing, the rippling spring murmured a kindly, comforting answer to the poor forgotten God of the Winds.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE STORY OF A GENIUS \*\*\*

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