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Absent.
And I am from thee, and the weary miles
Come as a barrier 'twixt these arms and thee;
Thy love-lit eyes, the sunshine of thy smiles,
I cannot see.
That deep outpouring of the soul's fond wish,
When lip meets lip in long ecstatic kiss,
And thoughts, untongued, speak in the cheek's
deep flush,
Forbidden bliss;
That melting moment's calm, when passion's
spell,
Expiring, breathes a softly-murmured sigh,
And the head sinks to hide what else would
well.
From half-closed eyes
All this, and more, that tongue could never
tell,
Comes as a memory chilled by absence'
frown,
And the fierce throbs of love's most passionate
swell
Is chastened down,
Is chastened to that purer, calmer light,
Whose power nor Time, nor Distance can
erect,
For thy pure virtue and thy beauty's might
O'er both prevail.
Like some lone star on mirrored lake's calm
breast,
Thy image shines in purity and peace,
And in the stillness of a soul at rest
All passions cease.
—Tinsley's Magazine.

AT HIS MERCY.

Between the two men with whom this story is almost exclusively concerned there had long been a clearly marked difference of opinion on nearly every vital question on which they had ever discussed together—including even that which involves the moral distinctions between justifiable homicide and downright murder. Yet they had never evinced any disposition to avoid the society of each other, and when they met, which had been rather frequently of late, they chatted together pleasantly enough on indifferent topics, and seemed content to maintain a studied reticence whenever a question was inadvertently raised upon which their views were pretty certain to be totally at variance. The elder of the two men was called Otto Inklemann. His father had been a somewhat noted sausage maker in the Prussian town of Halle, where Otto had been employed as a boy in helping to vend the products of the paternal skill at a certain pork shop not far from the venerable university which forms the chief feature of the quiet old town by the Saale. Otto's education had been, however, by no means so much neglected as might be inferred from his humble position in life.

At the age of eighteen Otto Inklemann, growing tired of a life so distasteful to him, forsook his father's roof, and joined a troop of strolling players that he encountered in a small town near many miles from the Hartz mountains. These enterprising wanderers proved equally ready to present scenes from Schiller and from Kotzebue, or to exhibit their suppleness and muscular power in the performance of those gymnastic feats which are usually associated with the sawdust of the country circus.

Even as a child, Otto had evinced a singular liking for walking on the tops of gates, and for running along the summit of a very high wall, which formed one side of his father's garden. As time went on, this passion for climbing to dangerous heights became so strong as to lead him on one occasion to accompany a daring workman in his ascent to repair the weather-cock of a neighboring church. It was not at all surprising, then, that the youth should accept with avidity an offer made by one of the itinerant company to teach him the art of walking upon the tight-rope. So assiduously and fearlessly, indeed, did Otto Inklemann pursue his new vocation that five years had hardly elapsed ere his astonishing nerve and skill had secured for him engagements in every capital in Europe. It was after a second very lucrative tour of this kind that he made the acquaintance, at Lyons, of Walter Knight, the other individual referred to by me at the outset. The men again met at Paris, soon after, whither Otto had gone to fulfill a somewhat lengthy engagement; and it was toward the close of his stay in that city that he became the husband of his early love, Gretchen, a fair-haired German girl, with a complexion in which ivory-white and the pink of the blushing rose were pleasingly blended.

Walter Knight, the descendant of a family which had figured prominently during the wars of the Roses, was at this time engaged as an assistant scene-painter at a small theatre which used to stand in a narrow street not far from the Luxembourg. He saw Otto Inklemann frequently at a neighboring cafe, to which the rope-walker daily went when he sat down to his daintily-arranged dinner; from which he made it a rule never to rise till the large gilded clock which faced him had marked the lapse

of an hour and a half. To this meal, as well as to dinner, Otto several times invited the young painter, for the former was glad to have some one near him, besides his wife, who could speak to him in his native language, the only one in which he was able to express himself with clearness. Otto had a strong dislike to any one who attached the slightest importance to patrician lineage, and this was one of the subjects which the two friends mutually agreed to avoid. But Gretchen was as yet unconscious of this feeling on the part of her husband, and she would sometimes, as she knew hardly anything of the English and their history, encourage Walter Knight to speak of the country in which he was born, and he was thus insensibly led on one occasion to touch briefly upon the part which his family, in times long since gone by, had played on more than one well-fought field. The sneer, however, which this recital brought to the thin, pale lips of Otto Inklemann soon reminded Walter Knight that the subject which he had introduced was a distasteful one to his host.

Upon a certain afternoon, when the young scene-painter had been maintaining a lively conversation with Gretchen, the light-blue eyes of Otto Inklemann were suddenly raised from the plate in which he had been rather gloomily contemplating for some minutes his untasted strawberries, and asked abruptly:

"Do you find scene-painting a profitable occupation?"

Walter Knight turned from Gretchen to the speaker, and looked at him with a studied expression of surprise on his face, not unmixed, however, with a shade of annoyance. Unless a man is remarkably successful in the career he has chosen, he rarely likes to be questioned as to the income yielded by his efforts. Some such feeling as this prompted the Englishman to reply, after a forced laugh:

"Why do you ask that, Inklemann; are you dissatisfied with the pecuniary results of following your own calling, and do you wish to begin the study of my profession at the close of your Paris engagement?"

"No," answered the other, quietly, "my performance on the high rope is now bringing me in one thousand francs each time I appear, and I don't think there is any other way open to me of getting so large an income with so little risk."

"So little risk!" echoed Walter Knight, raising his eyebrows. "Oh, yes; now I catch the spirit of your grim humor. There is merely the risk of falling from a height considerable greater than that of this house, and in such a way meeting with certain death."

"I was alluding to the very remote chance I ever have of losing a single dollar of what I once earn. It would not be so were I to invest my savings in business, you know," explained the German, somewhat coldly.

"But, Otto, we have enough—oh, surely enough—without your continuing to endanger your life," pleaded Gretchen, with a slight shiver and an anxious glance at their guest.

"When we first spoke of marriage, Gretchen, you told me that it was my courage, my daring, made you love me, and now you speak of the performances which have made me famous and yielded me plenty of money, with a shuddering dislike," said Otto, in a cold, hard voice, which brought a startled expression into her deep blue eyes.

"Yes, at first, dear Otto; but now that I am your wife I could wish that you were anything rather than what you are," she answered, earnestly.

"That is a pity," he said, sneeringly, "for you will have to be content with my way of life for the next few years, anyhow. I like it. To me there is no risk in it, I can walk upon a rope at any height with just as much safety as I can step across the floor of this room. But I have a proposal to make to you, my friend," he added, turning to Walter Knight, "and one which I think may be made very advantageous to you. I have been getting five hundred francs extra a night during the past week for this new exploit of mine with the wheelbarrow, but the man I wheel over the rope has fallen suddenly ill, so I was told this morning, and it would take me a considerable time to discover any one with nerve enough to take his place. Now, until the person I speak of recovers—I went up with him to the weather-cock of a church when I was a boy—I am willing to divide the extra sum which I am to get, with you, if you will agree to my wheeling you across the rope in the barrow, during the performances of the next twenty days. You would have nothing to fear in my hands."

"Oh, no! I do not consent to that," Herr Knight," said Gretchen, quickly. "You would turn giddy, and—and I don't at all approve of Otto's new feat, for you might—"

She stopped in some trepidation on observing the strange look of expectancy which was visible in her husband's face.

"Well, go on. He might, what?" asked Otto Inklemann, in a low, steady voice.

"Why, if I turned giddy I should cause the loss of your life as well as my own. That is what your wife means, I presume," broke in Walter Knight. "But I don't think that would be at all likely, if I had determination enough to look upward constantly."

"You have active courage enough, I am certain," said the rope-walker, after a few moments' silence, during which he fixed his eyes searchingly on the face of his friend. "But have you passive courage? Can you resign yourself with implicit confidence into my hands, and regard yourself as a being who has no right to have any opinion whatever about the possibility of falling, save that which I may choose to convey to you? For our undertaking you must regard yourself as a mere helpless mass, without the power of voluntary movement, and dependent upon me in every respect. Make up your mind to be all this, and I can answer for it that you will be as safe as you are at the present moment."

"I have no doubt that I could submit my eyes as a precautionary measure, and then—"

"Yes, you might shut them at the starting point; but I don't think you could keep them shut," interrupted Otto Inklemann.

"I have never felt any nervousness, even when standing at the edge of a precipice," remarked the painter.

"Then I am quite willing to wheel you across the rope and back. But remember," said Otto slowly and clearly, "that if you become, contrary to my expectation, frightened, and try to balance yourself, by leaning either to one side or the other, I shall be obliged, for my own sake, to drop the handles of the wheelbarrow and abandon you to your fate."

"Oh, Otto, that would be too horrible!" exclaimed Gretchen, covering her eyes with her hands, as if to shut out some shocking vision.

"Would it, my little wife?" said the rope-walker, dryly, as he rose and took a box of cigarettes from a side table—he did not smoke himself—and offered them to his guest. Gretchen got up from her chair also at this hint, and left the two men alone.

"It is agreed, then, that you are to trust yourself to me this evening," interrupted Otto, after a short silence.

"Yes," replied Walter Knight, who had been looking abstractedly at the time piece. "I am willing to take the risk upon the terms of remuneration you have mentioned. The fact is, I have pressing need of two thousand francs, and must have them ere the close of next week."

"Very well, then, we must have a rehearsal this afternoon with a net slung a few yards below you; but, of course, you understand that there will be no need when we appear before the public to-night," said Otto.

"Perfectly. I take the risk in consideration with the gain," answered the other.

They parted a few minutes later, with more cordial expressions of good feeling on the part of Otto than the painter had ever before received from his friend.

Otto soon after went out and walked rapidly toward the building where he now nightly performed. He overtook Walter Knight, who had stopped to speak to one of the actors at the theater, but when Otto had turned into another street, and nearly reached the bottom of it, he turned and retraced his steps; he had forgotten to bring with him a pair of velvet shoes which he wore during his dangerous performance. When within a few yards of his own door, he saw the figure of a man upon the steps in the act of pulling the bell. It was that of Walter Knight. The German touched him on the shoulder and said in a thin, strained voice, "Returned again so soon, my dear friend! Why, how did you know that I should turn back for my shoes?"

"I didn't know it," replied Walter, simply.

"I believe you," said Otto, quickly suppressing the outburst of a bitter laugh into which he had been betrayed, and changing it to a cough.

"I came back for my umbrella, which I left here," explained the painter.

"I rather think you hadn't one; we shall see."

They entered the house, but their search for the missing article was in vain.

"Ah, well," said Walter, as they once more reached the street, "I must have left it on one of the tables at the cafe."

Otto smiled, and then he asked, with something of eagerness in his manner: "You will not fail me at the last moment to-night? It would go to disappoint a large audience in carnival

time, you know. That kind of thing is apt to make one unpopular, and might cause a row. You must come, now."

Walter laughed as he said: "I am too much in want of the money to miss the chance of earning such a sum lightly."

Again they parted, to meet in an hour's time for the rehearsal. No sooner had Walter passed through the preliminary ordeal than he hastened to his lodgings and wrote a lengthy letter to his sister at Pimlico. An excerpt from his epistle will sufficiently indicate the nature of its contents:

"So with this money I can pay off the liability that poor Charles has contracted, and prevent the arrest that he dreads so much. With the balance I shall return next month to London, and after he descended to the hall door and had just opened it when he saw Gretchen standing without. She was pale, and her eyelids had that redness which tells of many tears. It seemed to Walter that she had been waiting irresolutely at the door.

"Herr Knight," she said, in a hurried voice, speaking as she always did to him in her native language. "I have come to advise you, to implore you, not to trust yourself on that fearful rope. I cannot tell you all my reasons for dreading some fatal result. But believe me when I say that your life—"

"There is not the slightest risk if he does what is right," said a voice.

She turned with a half-suppressed scream, and saw that her husband was almost at her side. He had crossed over unperceived from an archway nearly opposite, where he had been hidden from view while his wife had been waiting.

"Come, Gretchen," Otto went on in a cheerful well modulated voice, "as a reward for your continued anxiety about my dear friend's safety we shall insist on your witnessing our performance yourself this evening. Let us go home now, my little wife, it is almost time that I should prepare for the rope. I shall expect to see you," he added, as he nodded to Walter Knight, "in an hour's time. The husband of Gretchen then left her away by clasping one of her arms just above the elbow.

Walter Knight thought it somewhat strange that she should exhibit so much nervousness respecting the risk he was about to run, when her husband was nightly in the habit of encountering a peril equally great. But the young painter soon came to the conclusion that the course she had just taken had been prompted by some suddenly awakened fear that her husband's safety would be placed in unusual jeopardy by having a new occupant of the wheelbarrow.

Absorbed by these thoughts he forgot to post his letter and at length turned into the cafe where he had met Inklemann that morning. Here he soon found that the missing umbrella had been taken charge of by the lady of the counter who had received it from one of the waiters.

From this place he passed along some of the boulevards, now crowded by tourists. He was rejoined by Otto Inklemann at the entrance to their destination.

The vast building, with its tier upon tier of boxes, was crowded when Otto made his appearance. He was watched with breathless interest as he placed himself in the barrow, and ran the grooved wheel on the chalked rope which was stretched from one side of the house to the other, and at a height but little below that of the lofty ceiling. When the rope-walker had accomplished half the distance across, he stopped, as was his custom, and the applause became general and continuous. In spite of the noise in the house, Walter soon became conscious that Otto was speaking to him.

"You are able to hear me, are you not, Walter Knight?" said Otto at length.

"Oh, yes; but I fear that my nerves are not quite strong enough to admit of turning my head round to look at you, even if that were not contrary to orders."

"Listen, but do not move; the slightest movement on your part would be the signal for your death," was uttered by Otto in a tone almost fierce.

"Then I will take particular care not to wink even," answered Walter, firmly.

"Now, attend. Your secret is known to me," said the rope-walker.

"What secret?" asked the other, in a tone of wonder.

"The secret of your love."

"That can have no interest for you,

Inklemann," rejoined Walter, who now began to experience an undefined dread. "You think that I don't love my wife sufficiently for that, do you?" demanded Otto, in a deep voice, that had something tragic in its notes. "You shall soon be undeceived then."

"I think nothing of the kind," replied Walter quickly.

"Immortal! You shall die all the same within the next few minutes."

"Are you mad?" cried Walter, on whose forehead a profuse perspiration had suddenly broken out.

"Yes, I think I am," said Otto bitterly, "but that is not to the purpose. To be brief, my wife, has been false to me. Your return to my house to-day, when you unexpectedly encountered me, her anxiety for your safety, these and fifty other things that I have noticed—all prove my suspicions were correct."

"What frenzy is this which has seized you?"

"Remember that you are completely at my mercy and make a clean breast of it, before you lie a mass of broken bones on those empty iron chairs beneath us. It will be regarded as a pure accident by the audience, and I shall be avenged. I have suspected you both for sometime past, but not till to-day did I feel quite certain. As I look down upon you sitting there, I can almost see the letter which I am sure she gave you at your door. It was peeping from the breast pocket of your coat, as I was putting you into the barrow. Now, tell me how long this has been going on, or I will drop the handles I hold, and send you headlong below." This last sentence was hissed through Otto's clenched teeth.

"Inklemann," said the painter in that thick broken voice, which proceeds from a throat parched by feverish emotion, "you are the victim of a delusion, the offspring of a wildly jealous nature. Your wife, even if she were her when she was Franzen Schultz would never have made any impression on my heart. I am, in fact, engaged to a woman whom I love dearer than all the world beside, and this very letter you speak of, which I forgot to post on my way hither, would prove what I say, if you could see it."

"Then let me see it," said Otto, doubtfully.

"I cannot; it would be death, you know, were I to move," replied Walter Knight.

"All false; a mere trick to gain time."

"Wheel me to the other side, and then I solemnly promise to show you the letter. As to the umbrella, ask at the cafe if I did not find it there an hour ago."

The applause had gradually subsided; but the strains of a large military band beneath, still rendered their voices audible to none but themselves.

"No, you would then escape me; but stop, I can balance you with one hand, resting a leg of the barrow on the rope. With the other hand I can take the letter from you, and read sufficient of it for my purpose, if you can hand it to me steadily over your left shoulder. But beware of too sudden a movement, either to one side or the other, if you would not lose your life sooner than I intend."

The letter was handed open to Otto Inklemann, amid the fresh outbursts of applause from the audience, who supposed that this new and difficult feat had been duly practiced for their delectation.

"Now you can murder me," said Walter Knight, "if you choose; but my last words will be, I'm quite innocent of the charge you have made against me."

"I am satisfied that you at least are not to blame. Perhaps I have been altogether mistaken," said Otto Inklemann, doubtfully; and then he wheeled his burden in safety to the other side of the house.

But Walter did not again trust his life to the rope-walker, and the painter had therefore to wait two years longer ere he wedded the woman of his choice.

Another White Rat.

Mr. John G. A. Orr exhibited at the Charlotte, (N. C.), Observer office, recently, a pure white rat with pink eyes. It was not a mouse, but a real rat, and was found in a house on his premises near the city, in which he had a quantity of corn stored. It is quite an infant yet, having just been taken from the nest in which it was born, and in which were found, also, six other young rats, but all of the regulation grey color except the one of which we speak particularly. One of the parties who were present at the discovery of the nest, says he saw the old mammy rat run away, and saw that she, too, was perfectly white, but, however, this may be, it is quite certain that this bantling is as white as it can be, and that all the others of the litter, of which it was a part, are grey.

Items of Interest.

King Humbert I. of Italy, is thirty-three.

Germany, Turkey and Brazil will probably not take part in the Paris exposition.

That was a very enterprising newspaper that tried to secure the report from the pistols.

Mary E. Booth, daughter of Junius Brutus Booth, has gone on the stage in Philadelphia.

The principal articles exported from the United States to Europe are grain, pork, lard, savings bank presidents' meat, butter, heiressees, weather predictions and horses.

GLOOM.

"The darkest day in all the year?—The rest will then be lighter; The saddest day?—then banish fear: To-morrow will be brighter."

Two hundred and twenty street lamps at Providence, R. I., which extend over a distance of nine miles, are now lighted and extinguished by electricity, in less than fifteen seconds by one man.

The expenses of Stanley's great African journey, just concluded, have been about \$115,000, borne equally by the New York Herald and London Telegraph—more than any previous African expedition, private or governmental, and giving more complete and important results than any other.

The American people are the greater readers in the world. They read any thing almost, and everything. Africa just now is a popular subject, and man books treating of it are issued. All of them describe one of the sea-coast tribes who use buttons for money. This peculiarity makes such a deep impression on the minds of many readers, that when they go to church Sundays they thoughtlessly put buttons in the collection box instead of cash.

A singular death from starvation took place at Rockville, Conn., recently. About a year ago a Scotchman named Montgomery, overseer in a ginshat mill there, who had been in poor health for some time, applied to the Hartford hospital for treatment, and it was found that the passage leading from the stomach to the abdomen was growing up. A tube was introduced for the purpose of opening a passage, and the experiment was for a time successful, but the effect was not permanent, and for some months he took no food except liquid through this tube. He gradually wasted away, but was at his place in the mill five days before he died.

"The Golden Hand."

The Brussels police are much elated by the capture of a female pickpocket who is reputed to be the ablest operator of that line, and is known by the sobriquet of "The Golden Hand." This artist at her husband work in concert, and has quite a European reputation. Berlin, Vienna, London and Paris have in turn been the scene of her exploits; indeed the lady boasts that she has made it tour of the world. In Paris they have spent eleven years, but though robbers actively all the time, their operations were conducted with such marvelous skill and cunning that no robbery could ever be brought home to them. However, the fatal day came last month.

Detective who was shadowing Madam T'Servanx saw her approach a lady in the Northern railroad, who was buying her ticket. "The Golden Hand" followed the passenger, and just as she was entering the railroad carriage, she appeared intent on doing the same. This caused a little embarrassment, which ended by Madame T'Servanx gracefully giving way, and presently leaving the station. "Have you your purse?" asked the detective. "Gracious, it's got and full of money, too," was the answer. "The Golden Hand" was arrested a few minutes later, and her husband congratulated the officer in most flattering terms.

Andrew Johnson and the Dog.

A Greenville neighbor of Andrew Johnson owned a dog which was favorite of the ex-President's. The dog before he died he stroked the snout upon the head, saying, "Prince, you and I are getting old; we are not to live for this world." This was Sunday Monday night he died, a short distance from Greenville, and Wednesday a train brought his remains home. "Prince was at the depot, and the car contained Johnson's remains ran over the faithful dog, crushing on his life. This recollection vividly makes the ex-President had only three days before. It is said that during the first two years of his Greenville life after his return from the Presidency he was as restless as a caged lion, walking about the streets with employment, and apparently desecrating the long days hanging upon his hands, and no way to take of the time congenial with his tastes.