

and that it was on a stretcher of Spanish oak, worm-eaten, dark with age, and undoubtedly a genuine antique. While puzzling myself why and how these things should be, I stepped upon the estrade. As I recollect that moment, I seem to feel again the great throbbing that my heart gave, and the sickening pause during which I could draw no breath, at the sight which met my eyes. But for a thought as sudden as my look, that what I saw was only a work of frightful art, I am afraid to think what the effect of the shock might have been. In the deep silver salver, already mentioned as surmounting the marble pedestal, seeming freshly severed from the trunk, bespattered and bedabbled in a pool of blood, was lying a human head—that of a man, probably thirty years old—the features eminently beautiful, relieved in their bloodless pallor by magnificent black hair and a sable beard. Unquestionably it was the face of a Jew, and as unquestionably the same face I had seen and scrutinised only an hour before.

I think it was the recognition that enabled me to withstand the shock; for, while seeing it was he, I knew it could not be he. Lightning-like, under some conditions, are the operations of the mind. In less than a moment I seemed to reason and bring out my conclusion—that the man whom I had remarked by the light of the carriage-lamp must have been the model for this admirable effigy of a John Baptist's head; executed, probably, to satisfy some morbid devotional feeling. I was so convinced, that curiosity began to prevail over my first horror and disgust. But while I gazed, my senses encountered the unmistakable odour of blood and death. A convulsive desperation forced me to put forth a shrinking finger and to touch the sad cheek. Good God!—it was real!—it was dead flesh!

What a horror fell upon me! The touch acted like a spell to burst the elements of a thousand tales of crime that I had heard or read, and buried in my memory. Starting from each uprose a gashed and bloody spectre, till my imagination was thronged with frightful forms of murder. I remember feeling an irresistible terror mingled with loathing, then a sense of deadly sickness; then—I recollect nothing for a time—I had fainted.

How long an interval elapsed before I recovered, I know not. My first consciousness was of some pungent essence acting acutely upon my nasal organs; and at the same time of choking by brandy, which some one was pouring down my throat. Gasping for breath, I started up, for a moment wondering where I was, and what had happened; but all the circumstances of the situation soon flashed upon me. Now others were added to them, which, if not so frightful in character, were certainly to the full as mysterious. With the tingling in my nose, and the taste of cognac on my palate—with my subtle-veiled guide holding a vinaigrette in one hand, and a *pistole* in the other—I could not for a single moment make a pretence to myself that I was dreaming. Yet what met my look was more like the splendid creation of a vision than a being of waking reality. Standing on the estrade—lightly poised on one sandaled foot, with the other thrown just behind it, and resting only on the bent toe; one exquisitely-modelled arm hanging loosely from the shoulder, the other gracefully curved at the elbow and wrist, with the hand supported on the rim of the ominous salver by the forefinger only; the rich swellings of the pearly bust thrown high in half-profile; the wondrous visage turned towards me, with, oh, such marvellous depths of calm wistful sorrow in the large brown eyes—I beheld a young female whose beauty of form and face surpassed all I had ever seen in nature or art—whose loveliness was beyond all that my happiest imaginations had ever conceived.

Her dress was superbly adapted to her beauty. Suspended from the left shoulder by an embroidered strap with a large jewelled clasp at its middle, she had on a gold-tinted tunic of some gorgeous tissue as soft and glittering as satin, but like no satin I had ever seen, falling lightly across the breast on that side, and leaving all the other, to the waist, with the shoulder and arm bare; from under a girdle, thickly studded with precious stones, clasping the waist high up beneath the bosom, it hung in straight folds, reaching only to the knee, and terminating in a border of high-embossed ornaments upon purple velvet. The ends of a scarf, adorned with gold fringe upon a white ground, as transparent and delicate as lace, and terminating in gold fringes so ponderous and deep that it was a marvel they could be sustained by so slight a texture, were brought from behind over the hips, and fell in unequal lengths from the knot, low in front, by which they were confined. A tiara of sapphires and diamonds blazed across her forehead, and among the wavy masses of her glorious hair, rich with lights of ruddy yellow and purple shades. Clasping the upper part of her white rounded arm was a cincture of heavy gold with long pendants of emeralds; and enormous jewels, which gleamed like rubies set in circlets of pearls, hung in her small pink ears. More jewels flashed from her wrists and fingers, and from the lacings of her purple sandals. How shall I describe her further? Tall, graceful, slender, yet full and exquisitely rounded, her form looked perfect in womanhood; but among the finely-chiselled features of her face a fresh girlhood seemed yet to linger and play, despite a constant look of sorrow, so tender and mournful—so appealing—that it touched the pity in my heart, and caused it to vibrate with all the pain of her surmised but unknown suffering.

The trance of surprise into which I had fallen while gazing was broken by the croaking voice of my hostess asking, in a really affectionate sort of way,—

"Ist you petter now, oder vill you hafe some more prante?"

"Good God!" I cried, "what is the meaning of this?"

"De mein?"—what of?"

"That bloody head—that lady?"

"Dat ist de h'atee you ist to baint, an' dats de part of de shen'tman I shepck apout," she answered coolly. "Ve vants a Salome mit a Shone Paptist. Besser you doos eem so kevic as efer you cau; he vont keep long, you knows."

She spoke of the dreadful obj. et. as indifferently as if she were a butcher's wife talking of mutton-chops.

"Great heaven! madam, I cannot, unless I am satisfied as to his fate."

She came to my front, and, I suppose, stared hard at me; then, after a pause, raised her gloved hand, and, shaking her forefinger in my face, spoke in a very decided manner,—

"I tellt you as vee hafe our secret. You has gife your vort as you ast no kevestions. All vhat you has to do ist to baint de picture—dem ist our pargains; alle oder ting ist no peassiness of yours."

There could be no doubt of it—she was right. I glanced appealingly from her to the wonderful creature standing on the throne, but encountered only the same look of wistful sor-

row which had so thrilled me already. I was about to remonstrate again.

"Hear me, madam, I—" but she interrupted me at once.

"Besser dan you talks you shticks to your pargain; an' you finds vee vont pe vorsser as ours."

I felt rather cowed. The resolute tone in which she spoke, the recollection of the way in which I had been handled, and the thick black veil which repelled all attempts to judge of the speaker by feature and expression, together, tended to impress my excited apprehension menacingly—to silence and subdue me. Besides, just then, at I imagine, some unobserved signal, the beautiful young lady, lifting the salver with its livid burden, threw herself into a pose which, whether it had been previously studied or was spontaneous, so perfectly satisfied my ideas of grace and meaning, that my art-enthusiasm soon superseded all other subjects and emotions.

It was under these circumstances that I commenced my work. As it grew upon the canvas my ardour grew with it. Inspired by the unspeakable loveliness of my model, idea after idea rushed in upon me, each of a higher beauty than the last, but each of the last raising each of the former to its own glorious standard, till, when I threw down my port-crayon, what was as yet a mere outlined space, presented to my eyes a vision of form and expression, of glowing light and colour, whose harmonies made my spirit faint with rapture.

As I stood absorbed contemplating my sketch, the wheezy voice of my hostess broke upon my reverie,—

"Soh you has doon enough for dis vonce, ferry goot! You finds drough dere," pointing to one of the doors, "your zimmer, your pet-room—eferyting gomfortable. Dere ist von gallerie, whenever you likes to vork, where you can stretch your lecks. S'pose you goos dere now, an' vee has in ten minuits subber for you here."

Supper!—my thoughts reverted to that loathsome object in the salver. "I have been nervously ill lately," I said; "I fear I should be unable to eat anything with that—that, you know, before me." I pointed as I spoke. Her voice was pitched in the highest tones of surprise as she replied,—

"Curios! das is ja curios! Nefers meint; when you cooms pack, you finds eem not here. Vee puts him down in de coldt to make eem keep."

I had scarcely sickened so much, at the sight itself as I did now at the way she spoke of it; and without further parley, with one parting look at the Salome, rushed away.

As soon as I had passed out of the studio I found myself in the gallery. From this passage, as it really was, a door opened into my bedroom. There, a cursory glance showed me, everything was perfectly comfortable. I gladly availed myself of the few minutes allowed to try—by plunging my head and hands into cold water, and by brushing the former till it smarted—to freshen up my faculties, and clear somewhat the confusion of my mind, before returning. When I did so I found beautiful lady and bloody salver both gone, and only the duenna there, as I benamed her to myself on the spot, standing beside a table set out with delicacies.

"In de dum-vaiter ist de vines—you finds dem dere," she said, pointing to it. "Vee wishes you goot abbetite. You sitz an' you shumokes here, oder you goes to your pet as mo'sh as efer you likes." She appeared to be going, but returned to say, in a most amiable manner: "Eef you is not keville gomfortable, oder you vants something, you shust tells me in de mornen, an' vee doos ect. Gute nacht, schlafen sie wohl!" and she left me alone.

Instinctively certain of its uselessness, I made no attempt to discover if there were any means of escape; but instead, with a pipe and some remarkable claret for aids—for I could eat nothing—I set myself to serious reflection. Events had occurred so rapidly, each more extraordinary than the others, every one so unprecedented in my experience, and running through all, were circumstances so incongruous that, after vainly trying to think them over with deliberation and reason out their consequences, I gave up the attempt, and yielded myself to the fascination of one overpowering idea. All other facts and every adjunct connected with them fell away, retired, and ranged themselves behind and far beyond it—veiled themselves in a haze of remoteness, which I ceased to endeavour to penetrate; while this, coming to the foreground, blazed on my imagination in its own effulgence. Beauty, such as I had seen to-night, I had never seen before; nor had it entered into my heart that it might be. While delineating it, I had, so to speak, absorbed it—face and form, feature and limb—the sorrow-fraught look of the violet-lidded eyes, and tender seriousness of the curved lip—the lines of the rounded cheek, and the dimpled chin crowned as with a rosebud—the pearly hues of its polished skin encircled with traceries of delicate blue—the bright shimmering of the waves of its auburn hair—its grace, in every gesture making "poetry of motion,"—and, as the Eastern drug subdues its votary, I found it master all my other faculties, exciting and leaving in me but one power—to dream.

I made no attempt, at least then, to resist, but, I fear, rather instigated its tyranny, by what, for one of my abstemious habits and depressed state of health, were over-copious draughts of wine, and unusual smokings-out of many pipes. I may as well confess the consequences. I am unable to recollect any succeeding circumstances, till, on the following morning, I started up from heavy sleep, wide awake, with an aching head, a feverish trickling through all my veins, and a feeling of remorse oppressing me as for some vague crime I had committed. The luxury of a cold bath and a rapid walk up and down the outside passage to promote circulation, however, soon restored tension to my relaxed nerves, and set me up again in body and spirit. As I became calmer, the idea of the night before recurred to my mind, but not in such overpowering force as then. Another feeling arose to share its intensity—curiosity. All my endeavours to gratify it were, however, futile. The door leading to the studio, and both the others in the passage, were locked. The window of my bedroom opened only at the top, and its lower half was blocked by an immovable shutter. Standing on a chair and looking out of the upper part I could see nothing but the tops of over-greens growing thickly beneath, and the trunks and leafless branches of a close plantation beyond. Suddenly there recurred to me the story of the midwife, who, brought blindfold to the bedside of a lady, was enabled afterwards to identify the scene of a murder, by producing a snip of cloth, which, unobserved, she had cut from the hangings. The idea of the bloodless head, I know not how, had faded from my attention; but now, as I reflected, the possibility of its being the result of a dreadful crime revived with terrible circumstances, and set me in action. I began at once to make private marks on the

walls and furniture, by which, in case of need, I could identify the place, as well as produce evidence to conviction to satisfy others. While pursuing this work, a church clock, not very remote, struck eight. I paused to count the beats, and was resuming my furtive task, when a loud rap at my door sent the blood rushing to my heart, as if I had been caught in some horrible nefarious action. The knock was repeated before I could recover self-possession to answer or open. It was my hostess, the duenna, veiled and as imperviously disguised as before. My reflections upon her manners, language, and the character indicated by them, together with the possibility that she might be a murderess, or at least implicated with others in an abominable crime, made this woman intensely odious to me. Nothing, however, could be more kind than the manner, almost motherly, in which she bade me "Guten morgen," hoped I had slept well, and congratulated me on being an early riser.

"Dere ist your preakfast," she said, when we got into the studio. "You links dere ist anytings more as you vants."

I glanced at the table—heavens! what means for a feast! Tea, coffee, toast, butter, eggs, slices of delicate beef, a fowl, a tongue, anchovies, and—a bottle of maraschino. All I could reply was to thank her for such liberal provision. Then it was arranged that, my meal finished, I should retire for half an hour to walk, and, if I liked, smoke in the gallery; meanwhile, everything would be prepared in the studio for my work.

"You doos de head of de shen'tmans fust," suggested the lady, "Besser you doos eem fust."

"Yes, yes, certainly—by all means," I replied, with repressed loathing.

"Yah," she wheezed out, "yah, eet is besser."

Although I had eaten nothing since yesterday afternoon, and despite the provocatives to appetite before me, it was with difficulty I managed to make a very poor meal—I had such a choky sensation in my throat. "The part of the gentleman" this time had nothing to do with producing it—it was something very different. Before me was the sketch I had made a few hours ago, and the reflex of the vision that had then enchanted me resumed again, now, all its power of fascination over my fancy. I felt the danger of yielding to it, and manfully overcame the temptation of maraschino, although I was in exactly that state of perilous excitement which stimulates the desire to increase itself. These feelings only made my task, on returning to the studio from my walk, more repugnant. I had not, however, proceeded far in it before my aesthetic perceptions enabled me to regard the object I was painting *per se*. Through and beyond the mere beauty of the features the face had acquired and retained a nobleness and dignity from the mysterious expression and unfathomable calm of death. As, too, I wrought on the wonders of colour on the sad brow, cheek, and lip—the blendings of brown and purples beneath the sunken eyes, with the play and shimmer of light along the pale forehead and arched nose, over the sable hair and beard, and down among the flashing points of the embossed silver on to the sanguine drops below—revealed themselves, their contrasts and harmonies, against the equally wondrous shadows; in beauty—the power to feel which must, I suppose, be born with one, but which, however it comes, I thank heaven I have.

Once engaged in it, I became thoroughly absorbed in my work, and never paused till, having done all I could for the present, I stopped to contemplate its effect; when that duenna, who I began to believe was born to shake my nerves, who seemed to live and move and have her being in mystery, startled me, by asking, in her thick choky tones, "Don't you vants your dinner?"

She was sitting behind me, very composedly, in one chair, with her feet resting upon another.

"You doos eem ferry pe-u-ti-fool! eet ist vunderfool! Doos you not vant your dinner? You raint avay agin eef you doos not hafe your dinner."

"Bless my soul!" I could not help exclaiming, "how long have you been here?"

"A-n-eh! efer so long."

"Did you come in at the door?" I asked confusedly.

"Gewiss—ya'es—drough der tore. When ist you reaty fore your dinner?"

"Why, madam, I can do no more for the present, so when—"

"Vell, I links dat," she interrupted me by saying, and getting up to go; "den you goes an' vashes yourself; an' in von vortel—das ist, kevarter von hour—you cooms pack, an' you finds your dinner alle nice!"

What shallow creatures we are! for myself, at least, I may confess as much. For I was immensely pleased by the duenna's admiration of what I had done; principally, perhaps, because she expressed what was in my own thought, though I had not dared to say as much to myself.

Upon my return to the studio I found a table profusely spread with luxuries, for at least one-half of which I could find no names in my experience. I may as well mention here, that all the time this adventure lasted my board was supplied with such delicious profusion, so exquisitely prepared, that its remembrance has made me a rather fastidious liver ever since. Without being conscious of it while at work, I had become much exhausted. It told upon me now, I suppose; for after dining, before getting through half a cigar, I dropped off into a sound sleep. For how long, I know not; but when I awoke—silence, mystery, and startling surprise again!—the table was cleared, the black-veiled lady was seated before my picture, and there, upon the throne, stood that vision of beauty in all her transcendent loveliness, with those eyes of hers, as full as before of appealing sadness, fixed wistfully upon mine. Greatly abashed, and too much dazed to be perfectly self-possessed, I began to address to her a confused apology for my want of vigilance, when, starting up and interposing between us, the duenna shouted at me in her vulgar German and shrillest tones,—

"Halt des mant, gleich!" She seemed suddenly roused into uncontrollable rage, for she stamped her foot and actually threatened me with her clenched hand. "Vhat fore you dars shepck zu de Brinness?—she no unterstant von vort you shepcks; when you hafe so brinness, how dars you?"

To be continued.

At the Saratoga Woman suffrage Convention the only new thing uttered was by a Mrs. Blake, who said that woman's sphere has been bounded on the north by her husband, on the south by her baby, on the east by her mother-in-law, and on the west by her maid and aunt; they now propose to enlarge it.