

ASLEEP.

In summer-time how fair it showed!—
My garden by the village road,
Where fiery stalks of blossom glowed,
And roses softly blushed;
With azure spires and garlands white,
Pale bellotopes, the sun's delight,
And odors that perturbed the night
Where'er the south wind rushed.

There solemn purple pansies stood,
Gay tulips red with floral blood,
And wild things fresh from field and wood,
Alive with dainty grace.
Deep heaven-blue bells of columbine,
The darkly mystic passion-vine,
And clematis, that loves to twine,
Bedecked that happy place.

Beneath the strong unclouded blaze
Of long and fervent summer days
Their colours smote the passing gaze,
And dazzled every eye.
Their cups of scented honey-dew
Charmed all the bees that o'er them flew,
And butterflies of radiant hue
Paused as they floated by.

Now falls a cloud of smiling snow,
The bitter winds of winter blow,
No blossom dares its cup to show—
Earth holds them in her breast;
A shroud of white, a virgin fall,
Is slowly, softly, hiding all;
In vain shall any sweet wind call
To break their silent rest.

My garden is a vanished dream:
Dead in the waning moon's cold beam,
Clear fancies above it gleam—
And yet—I know not how—
My flowers will bear their drowsing rain
When Spring renews the hill and plain,
And then it shall be mine again:
It is God's garden now.

—ROSE TRENT COOKE, in *Harper's Magazine*.

THE SEER.

A TALE.—BY EDWARD LINDAU.

The fast train from London to Paris, via Folkestone and Boulogne, stops for a few minutes at Verton—an unimportant station where passengers are rarely set down or taken up. In general, the engine merely renews its supply of water, and the train proceeds on its way.

We were seven in the same carriage one fiercely hot day in July, and we had been grumbling ever since we left Boulogne, at the parsimony of the company which, in order to avoid adding a carriage, had thus crowded us, when suddenly, at Verton, just as the train was moving off, the door of our carriage was hastily opened, and an eighth—and most unwelcome—fellow-traveller made his appearance.

I occupied a corner near the door by which he entered. On my right an Englishman was sleeping soundly; and in front of him was the only vacant seat. It was filled with rugs, umbrellas, and other articles which we had all thrown there. Next to this unoccupied place, and opposite to me, sat a young man of about twenty-five, as to whose nationality I had entertained some doubts, until he drew from his pocket a cigarette-case in solid silver, filled with Russian papers. He selected one of these, squeezed it gently between his fingers, and lighted it by means of a long match attached to the case. He then inhaled the smoke with a deep breath, and afterwards exhaled it, with a peculiar look of enjoyment, through his fine and well-cut nostrils.

This young Russian, who wore a fashionable travelling suit, seemed out of health. His manners were those of a gentleman. He was very tall and thin, and, from the olive hue of his complexion, he might have been mistaken for a Spaniard or a Brazilian. The long, slender fingers of his well-shaped hand seemed endowed with strange flexibility, and were constantly stroking the long moustache which covered his upper lip. His small, regular, well-set teeth were of dazzling whiteness. His dark brown hair was short and very thick; it grew low down upon the forehead and upon the back of the neck, covering the narrow, elongated cranium, as with a dark turban. The youthful mouth, with its full ruddy lips, betrayed a nervous temperament, a kind, weak, and irresolute nature, and served to render attractive a countenance which otherwise might have appeared uninteresting, and even, to a certain degree, repellent. But the most striking feature in the face of my vis-à-vis were his eyes, which were round, black, set wide apart, and of exceeding brightness. They were restless to an almost wearying degree—wandering from one object to another, though from time to time they would be riveted on one or other of his fellow-travellers with curious pertinacity. I had, in my turn, been subjected to this strange examination, and had been disagreeably impressed by it. It was a suspicious, disquieting, inquisitorial look, and one felt strongly tempted to reply to it by a direct question: "Do you know me? Why do you look at me thus? What are you seeking to discover?"—This uncomfortable stare of the young Russian seemed the more strange from its being in complete contradiction with his otherwise polite and even courteous manners. It was a searching look, taking no account of those on whom it rested—a bold look, which I am tempted to compare to that of a police detective who, being in quest of a malefactor, is inclined to suspect that every new-comer is the man he wants.

The other end of the carriage was occupied by four Frenchmen who seemed to know each other, and who discussed the topics of the day.

All—with the exception of the Englishman, who continued to sleep imperturbably—glanced reproachfully at the intruder; but he seemed to take little heed of our ill-humour. "If you please," he said sharply, pointing to the heap of things which encumbered the vacant seat; upon which, each of us, with more or less good grace, hastened to select the articles which belonged to him, and stowed them away, either in the net or under the seat. One railway-rug, however, remained—its owner, the Englishman, being fast asleep. The new-comer waited an instant; then he unceremoniously bundled it up and kicked it under the seat. I could not help wondering at the free-and-easy way in which he treated another man's property. The train started at once, and then I examined attentively our new fellow-traveller.

His appearance was coarse and repulsive—the appearance of a rough, low-lived man in his Sunday clothes. His linen was rumpled and soiled with perspiration; his clothes and boots were ill-made and covered with dust. His age may have been about thirty, and he showed every sign of great bodily strength. He was short and thick-set; bull-throated, with round, massive shoulders, thick red hands, swollen with the heat, and flat hard nails; muscular wrists, and short, clumsy legs. A man with straw-coloured hair, cut short and brushed forward on the temples, bushy whiskers and no moustache; the sunburnt complexion of one who has led an out-door life; a low forehead, a thick nose, a wide mouth with thin tight lips, and a prominent jaw; bright, sharp, wicked eyes, which glanced stealthily and yet defiantly around. Such was the new-comer.

He was no sooner seated than he took a rapid survey of his fellow-travellers. It was apparently satisfactory, for he pulled out of his pocket a large coloured check handkerchief, and breathing loudly, he wiped the moisture from his brow. I then noticed that the first and second fingers of his right hand were bound up with fine cambric, apparently a woman's pocket-handkerchief. In the palm of the hand there was a large stain of clotted blood. These two fingers had evidently received a wound. After a few minutes he loosened his long black necktie, and drew a deep breath, like one who has gone through some violent bodily exercise, and is about to seek repose. Throwing off his round black hat with a jerk, he stretched out his legs, placed his two hands on his thighs, and, with his head bent forward and his eyes staring straight before him, remained apparently plunged in deep thought.

The young Russian had not failed to bestow on the new arrival that scrutinizing look with which, a short time before, he had examined me. This man seemed to interest him in a peculiar degree; for whereas a single glance had sufficed for me, he now turned round towards his left-hand neighbour, and looked at him with strange fixedness, as though he sought to engrave those vulgar and repulsive features on his memory.

The man who was the object of this persistent scrutiny was not aware of it for some time; he was too absorbed in his own reflections to notice what was going on around him. But suddenly, as the train slackened speed on nearing Abbeville, he raised his head to look out, and his eyes met those of the Russian. This latter seemed painfully embarrassed, while the new-comer, with an angry frown, and an inflamed countenance, turned upon him, and said roughly—

"Why are you looking at me? Do you know me? What do you want with me?"

I could not but consider these questions as quite justifiable; for I had been on the point, a short time before, of putting them to my opposite neighbour. The tone in which he replied, however, impressed me favourably.

"I beg your pardon," he said, in a gentle and deprecating voice. "Believe me, I had no intention of annoying you."

The man from Verton muttered something between his teeth. He then got up, and with a scarcely audible "By your leave," leaned forward between the Russian and myself to look out towards the station we were rapidly approaching. After a moment he sat down again; but the train had scarcely stopped when he jumped out of the carriage, and with his right hand thrust into the side-pocket of his coat, where he seemed to be holding something, he looked impatiently right and left. The platform was empty. Besides a few railway officials, there was only one gendarme, who walked slowly and unconcernedly along the train, looking into each carriage as he passed it. It chanced that he lingered a little in front of ours, and I then distinctly saw our fellow-traveller's hand take a tighter hold of the unseen article in his pocket. The gendarme passed on. When the train started again, the man got in; but he stood for some time between the Russian and myself, and only resumed his seat when we had left the station behind us, and were going at full speed.

The Russian had opened a book, and tried to assume the appearance of an unobservant reader, but his thoughts were not with his book—and now and again I saw him steal a glance at his neighbour. His countenance betrayed great perplexity, as though he were seeking the solution of some difficult problem. Once our eyes met. His look seemed to ask assistance from me, and to say, "Help me, if you can, to understand." I was beginning to feel rather puzzled at what was going on around me; so, at Amiens, finding myself near the Russian at the Buffet, I asked him whether he thought he recognized the traveller from Verton, as he watched him so persistently.

"No, I do not know him," he answered

politely, and in a tone which seemed to encourage further conversation; but the man has something about him which attracts me."

"Well, really," I answered, smiling. "I was not prepared for that answer. For my part, I must confess that his face has no attractions for me. It strikes me as peculiarly repulsive. The man looks like an escaped convict."

"An ugly face, truly,—a repulsive face,—quite a strange face."

The Russian, as he spoke, shuddered nervously.

"Will you excuse my giving you a piece of advice?" I added.

"Pray do."

"Well, then, I think you would do wisely not to pay further attention to your neighbour. Without wishing it, you might get embroiled in a quarrel. He seems a rough customer, and, at any rate, is a very ill-bred man. You must have noticed the rude, free and easy manner in which he thrust himself between you and me to look out of the carriage-window; he did it at Amiens, as well as at Abbeville. I felt angry, but held my tongue from prudence. With a man like that, I fancy, there would be little space between a word and a blow,—and the idea of coming to fist-cuffs with him does not tempt me."

From Amiens to Creil we continued to converse. I found him a well-bred, agreeable companion, and we soon discovered that we had some acquaintances in common, both in Paris and in St. Petersburg. He handed me his card, and, in my turn, I told him who I was. His name was Count Boris Stachowitch, and he lived in Paris, Avenue Friedland.

"How small the world is!" said my new friend. "Have you noticed that no man of a certain age, if he has seen something of the world, can ever meet any one with whom he is not connected by some anterior link? Half an hour ago you were a perfect stranger to me. The few words we have exchanged have shown me that one of my cousins is a friend of yours, and that I was at school with one of your relations. That does not surprise me; it is always so. I would wager that if I talked to your neighbour there who is snoring so sweetly, I should find out that he and I have something in common. Oh, what a little world it is! I have often wondered how anybody can manage to hide in it. I had, not long ago, a very interesting conversation on that very subject with one of the heads of the Secret Police. He was a man of wide experience, who could reckon by hundreds the thieves and murderers he had helped to capture. Among other things, he told me: 'Many crimes are never discovered at all, and those who have committed them of course elude justice; but scarcely one criminal out of a thousand, when once known, can long escape the grasp of the law. Sooner or later, whatever disguise he may have assumed, in whatever hole he may have taken refuge, we find him out. The trace of blood is never effaced. Once on the track, we are pretty sure never to lose it. The world is—'"

Here our conversation was interrupted suddenly. Stachowitch had been speaking loud enough for every word of his to be overheard by his neighbour, the man from Verton. The latter got up hastily, and, as at Abbeville and at Amiens, pushed forward between us to look out. All at once, before we could offer any opposition, he opened the door rapidly and stepped down on the narrow ledge which runs along the carriage.

We looked at each other in mute surprise. The next instant the man had leaped out on the line. I leant forward, and saw him rebound forwards, and then, with outstretched arms, fall flat upon his face. In a few seconds he was hidden from view by the wall of a garden which skirted the line.

The Russian had turned very pale. The four Frenchmen ceased their talking, and looked anxiously towards us. The Englishman was awake at last, and was looking for the railway rug the Verton man had thrust under the seat.

"What does it all mean?" said Stachowitch. I could only shrug my shoulders, for I could not make it out myself. We were soon to be enlightened.

We were drawing near to Paris and the train was beginning to slacken its speed. About a hundred yards from the terminus it came to a stand-still. The railway officials, who had been waiting for us on either side of the line, jumped on to the train, and passing along the carriages, said in a loud voice, while the engine began to move on, "Keep your places, gentlemen, if you please."

A minute later we entered the station. The place was empty. Then from the superintendent's office there came out two gentlemen, followed by one of the higher officials of the railway—one of them wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. They walked quickly up to the train, and stopped for a few seconds before each carriage. At last they came to ours. The gentleman with the red ribbon looked in, and cast a scrutinizing glance on each of us in turn.

"Has any one left this carriage since Verton station?" he asked.

He spoke to me, as being the nearest to him; but one of the Frenchmen cut in before me, and related rapidly all he knew about the eighth traveller—namely, that he had joined us at Verton, and had jumped from the train before it reached St. Denis. "This gentleman," he added, pointing to me, "can, no doubt, indicate the precise spot, for it was on his side that the man—a villainous-looking fellow—escaped."

The police agent—as we had rightly judged him to be—requested me then to describe the

missing passenger. I was able to answer accurately, for I had examined the man closely.

While I spoke, the agent nodded repeatedly, as in assent.

"No doubt," he said, when I had concluded my description, "that is the man. Please, sir, to follow me."

I gathered up my wraps and got down. Stachowitch followed. The railway guards shouted, "Paris," and while the platform was filling with passengers and porters, Stachowitch and I entered the office of the Special Commissary of Police. The order was given for an engine to be placed at our disposal, and a few minutes later I found myself seated in a luggage van, in company with the police agent, his attendant—a vigorous and apparently agile man of about thirty—two gendarmes, and lastly, the young Russian, who had obtained leave to come with us, after he had related to the agent the altercation which had taken place between the Verton stranger and himself. I had already described the spot where the man had jumped out, and had added that I felt confident of being able to point it out exactly.

On the way I learned from the police agent that the Baronne de Massieux, who lived with her daughter on a property near Boulogne-sur-Mer, had been murdered on the previous night, and that her coachman, Béchouard, was strongly suspected of being the author of the crime.

"The description of the man was telegraphed to us barely an hour ago," he added, "and we would have been in time to arrest him on the arrival of the train, if he had not thought fit to make off, before reaching Paris. But that won't avail him much. He can't be far, and we will soon overtake him. A murderer can no more be lost in the world, than a needle in a bundle of hay. All that's wanted, in either case, is patience to look for them."

Stachowitch nodded to me, as much as to say, "You see, I was right; the world is too small to hide in." But there was no time for further conversation. We had passed St. Denis, and we were now moving on slowly, in order to give me time to point out the spot.

"I know that house again," I said; "and this is the garden wall. Here is the place; but see! the man is there still—he has not moved. He is dead!"

We all got down. And there, just beyond the rails, flat on his face, lay the poor wretch we were seeking. His left arm was doubled beneath his chest, but the right arm was stretched out forwards, and was covered with earth. The cambric handkerchief had come undone in the violence of the fall, and from the re-opened wound it had concealed, a few drops of blood had trickled. The body lay motionless.

The police agent's assistant, who had been the first to jump out, sprang upon the prostrate form with the eagerness of a blood-hound on the track. He stooped down, and taking hold of a shoulder and a leg, with a dexterity which betrayed professional practice, he turned the body slowly over. Sure enough! The man was dead. The face was unmarked. At the corners of the mouth there was a slight taint of a reddish tint, and a few drops of blood which had gushed from the nostrils stood clotted on the upper lip. The wide-open eyes, of which only the whites were visible were horrible to see. Stachowitch, who had leant over my shoulder to look at the corpse, uttered a loud cry, and fell senseless to the ground.

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The murder of the Baronne de Massieux was soon forgotten by the general public. The judicial inquiry had established that the crime had been committed by Béchouard alone; he had not long eluded punishment, and was dead. Human justice had obtained satisfaction; the case offered no particular interest, and people ceased to talk about it. Two persons only thought of it often,—Madame de Massieux's young daughter Marie, who mourned the loss of a beloved mother, and Boris Stachowitch, whose life appeared to have been deeply influenced by that tragic event.

It was December, and six months had gone by since I had made the young Russian's acquaintance on the railway. We saw a good deal of each other. We lived in the same part of the town, had many common intimates, dined at the same restaurant, and rarely spent a day without meeting. My new friend interested me. Stachowitch, on many subjects, had original, and even wildly eccentric ideas; but it was evident that, with him there was no affectation either in speech or thought. I soon discovered many excellent qualities both of heart and mind in the young Russian; he was truthful, charitable, generous, and singularly gentle; he was eager for information, and, considering his age and position, had read and learned much. He was, in the true sense of the word, amiable. I should add, that I felt pity for him. Stachowitch it was evident, was unhappy, but I found it impossible to discover the cause of his secret sorrow. He never complained, and when I ventured to question him discreetly, his answers were so evasive, and his embarrassment so evident, that, for fear of offending, I soon desisted from any inquiry as to the cause of his constant and gloomy preoccupation. His apartments were splendid; he had carriages and horses, and was reckless of expense; evidently it was no want of money that troubled him. Nor could his health give him cause for anxiety. True, he always seemed languid and depressed; but he enjoyed an excellent appetite; and during an excursion we had made together, I had had opportunities of ascertaining that he was not only