

yet the world, the flesh, the devil and I have raised several pleasing excitements. I have disgraced myself in every gentlemanly way known to the century. No, there I wrong myself. I have never run away with my friend's wife; but moralists would be pained to know that my sole excuse for the defection is that I never had a friend."

"Hush! Cheviot—he will hear."

"She will hear sound, not sense," said her father, with dogged pride. "She is an experiment of mine. She has had no mother to ruin her morals with nagging platitudes, so I have been able to bring her up properly. Women make wrong-doing beautiful to children by religiously warning them away from it; now, Cheviot has no conception of anything that is not good—she has never heard evil explained—consequently to her mind the world is good, life is good, man is good. The word sin suggests to her a mere physical discomfort like the dolorous or measles. My way of bringing up would be a failure with a boy, I admit. But a girl never asks embarrassing questions—either from inborn delicacy or from weakness of intellect, take your choice: to her, life is a varied picture; to a boy it is a puzzle which he begins early enough to pick to pieces. Cheviot knows only what is good. You ought to hear her explain some polluted passages of Fielding in the light of her childish and pure understanding. She'll hold you spell-bound. I'll set her at it. Cheviot!"

"God!" cried the colonel, shuddering, and gripping Vlanee's arm. "Harold, you are mad!"

Indeed, the supposition was not far from being correct. A tumult of repressed excitement, with bitter recollections and hot shame, is apt to madden a naturally erratic brain into dangerous activity. Moreover, the faultlessly dressed and irreproachably correct colonel was an unconscious factor in the disturbance. Often than one thinks does a shining example lead an erring brother into acts of desperation, rather than into those of emulation.

Cheviot had come in response to her father's call, and, divining that between the two men was trouble brewing, she wisely asked:

"Don't you think, Harold, that it would calm our nerves if you were to play the violin for our guest?"

"Not if Rousseau was right when he said: 'Count all time lost that might have been better employed.'" answered her father. Nevertheless, she brought the instrument and placed it in his hands. Then she twined her fingers into those of Hugh and drew him down into a chair to listen, leaning against him with the pathetic trustfulness of childhood.

From the moment Vlanee's fingers closed

around the slender neck of the violin, his degradation and wildness fell away from him like a garment. He straightened up. With a rapid and masterful touch he tuned the instrument until it satisfied his absolutely correct ear: then he laid a caressing cheek upon it and asked a singular question:

"What is the theme, Cheviot?"

She gave herself a moment's thought before reciting quaintly, "Break, break, break, on thy cold gray stones, O sea! I have just been reading it, Harold."

"Very good indeed, O daughter of a musician," said Vlanee.

He mentally reviewed the poem, repeating aloud the lines which appealed to him. "Very good. 'I would that my tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me.' Strange that we never took this before, young lady." His bright eyes seemed burningly to pierce the squalid walls, and to see the restless ocean picture. "The tender grace of a day that is dead," he said dreamily; and then commenced to play.

The ocean surged first, with a murmuring tide running in, and every now and then coming up far enough and high enough to break upon the crags, only to wash complainingly back again. Next the ear caught a faint melody—a melody that could scarcely make itself heard above the water which rippled over it and tried to drown it out. Again and again with sad insistence it tried to be heard, and as persistently the sea broke over it, and silenced it and wept at the foot of the crags.

Vlanee's face was very tender and patient. Gradually the air gained strength and asserted itself. It got the mastery. It was beautiful with triumphant pulsations that bore the soul to mighty heights, and yet at the same time went down into a man's depths and brought up great handfuls of God-born thoughts that had been mud-covered for years. It was a wonderful throbbing melody that you felt was destined to roll on to a stately end; but before its completion you feared that you heard the sea again, so quiet in its encroachment, yet so resistless. The air faltered, and the voice of the sea spoke louder.

"Break, break, break," and you knew that the grand song was never to be finished. Wave after wave rolled up and broke suddenly over the stones; through all, the ear strained after the struggling melody. It had spent its force, and had given up. It was a creeping minor echo of what had been. It was dreadful to hear the change in it; its minor voice cried out almost humanly, and dragged the heart down with it to be beaten against the jagged stones, and then washed out, out, out into a distant, dark and sleepless sea. It was over.

"It is my life! You have heard my

story!" gasped Vlanee, his hand on his throat, choking back the dry sobs that were bursting his frame.

The sensitiveness of the child answered to the father's mood, and she broke into wild crying. "This is not to be encouraged. Harold," she wept. "It is bad for our constitutions."

At the sound of her voice and the touch of her hands, the last vestige of self-restraint gave way, and calling out, "Oh, my God! don't listen to me!" Vlanee dropped into a chair, and, hiding his face, fell to weeping, in the horrible fashion of a man who hopes he has forgotten how.

Colonel Haines induced the frightened child to go to her room, and returning to her father, he heard (in addition to what he had guessed) more—much more than one creature should hear from and about another to meet him again naturally. The collapse of such a nature is prone to be very complete, and the frenzied confidences of Harold Vlanee overleaped the outermost bounds of conventional good taste.

Duped and handicapped from the start in the worst possible way, he had taken his revenge upon the world by meeting every man as an enemy and fighting him upon that ground. Any sane person sees at once that such a course gains one more knock than friends. One inevitably gets worsted, too, in the unheroic but none the less despairing contest. But thousands are at it at the present moment; eventually, to be sure, they will see the folly of attempting to oppose the universe single-handed, and will learn the wisdom of fawning upon those who step upon them, and will thus gain fine opportunities of kicking back. But Vlanee approved not of these fine fin de siècle tactics, and fought it out until he was completely knocked under. Then he was reduced to the customary but friend-perverted and wholly illogical satisfaction of debasing himself.

He spared no detail of the recital. Not a page but its blotted lines were read to the compassionate listener. The candle struggled and went out; but then it is easiest to read a blotted page without a candle, especially to read it aloud. The moon lay in soft patches upon the floor, still further bridging over the chasm between the men, until they became as boys again, and talked, if not hand in hand, yet closer still, heart to heart. Of all their words we need but hear the last.

"You will let me pay my debt then, Harold? It isn't only my right, it is my only wish on earth."

"Do what you like! Pay what you like! I will take anything from you. You have promised to lift me up into daylight."

"Once more, good-night, Harold."

"Good-by. I will sleep without the drug to-night."

The next morning Cheviot came to the colonel's hotel with a note. The colonel