

fault of all novices—shifting the eyes. And now I'll tell you the great secret of all. The human neck, madam, is a very beautiful instrument, admirably adapted for a hundred purposes, but especially for being severed by an expert swordsman. Now, examine mine, while I explain. The spine, as you are aware, is the column of bones which, in the erect posture, supports the head on its summit, and consists of exactly four-and-twenty vertebræ. Of these, the upper seven are called cervical ; and it is with these, gentlemen—I mean madam—to which I have to call your attention. The cervical vertebræ, as seen from behind and above——”

I said, when I first spoke of him, that I could not make him out at all. Still less could I now—a man who was lecturing on the best way of cutting off his own head as coolly as if he were taking a class in a school of medicine. I verily believe that he was thinking of himself only as a subject, and that even to him there was something transcendently better than life—that is to say, the performance of an operation with decent and reasonable dexterity. Never in my life had I seen such coolness. Nor was it the coolness of the philosophic apathy which sometimes passes for courage. It was that of eager interest ; that of one to whom his work is supreme. But——

“Enough,” said Flamenka, signing him to the seat from which I had risen. And, as she spoke, she looked at me with the whole depth and war of her eyes, as if her will were calling upon its utmost strength to wage a crowning battle with mine.