

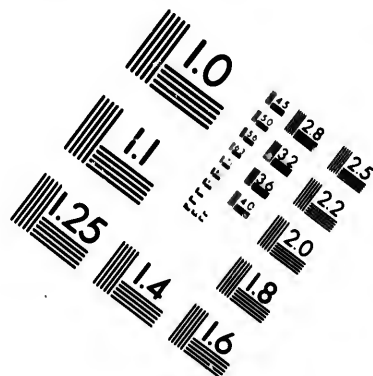
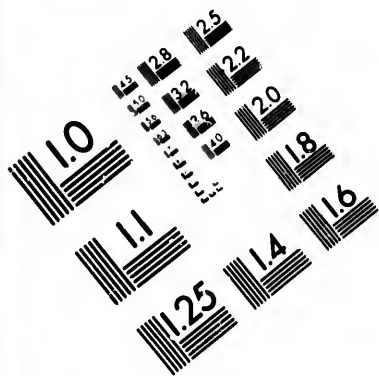
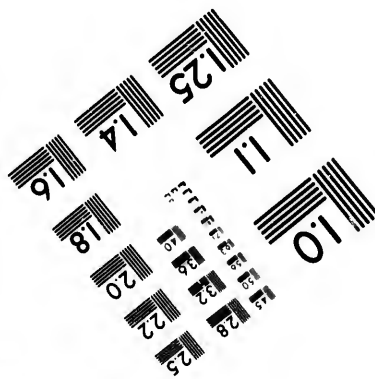
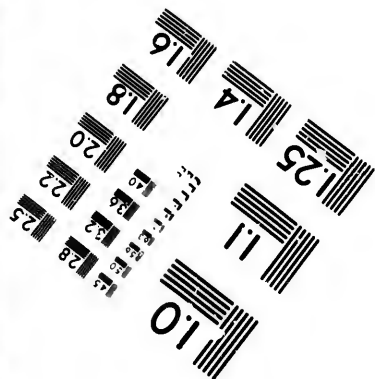
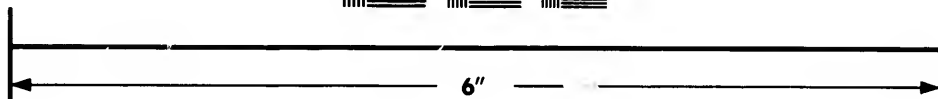
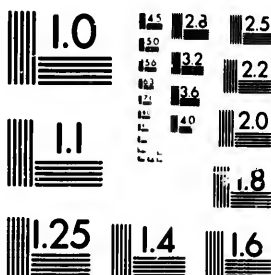


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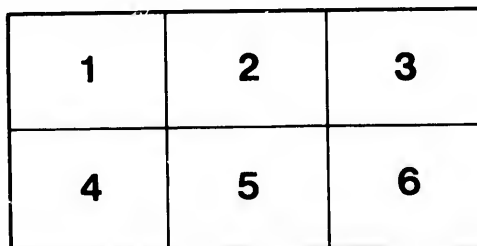
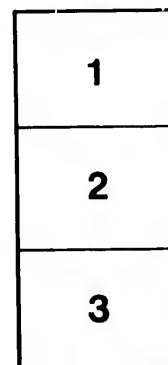
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CATARRH CAN BE CURED!

But not by the use of the liquids, snuffs, powders, etc., usually offered the public as catarrh cures. Some of these remedies may afford temporary relief but none have ever been known to effect a permanent cure. The reason for this is that these so-called cures do not reach the seat of the disease. To cure catarrh you must reach the root of the disease and remove the original cause of the trouble. NASAL BALM is the only remedy yet discovered that will do this. *It never fails*, and in even the most aggravated cases a cure is certain if NASAL BALM is persistently used. It is a well-known fact that catarrh in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred originated from a cold in the head, which the sufferer neglected. NASAL BALM affords immediate relief when used for cold in the head. It is easy to use, requiring no douche or instrument, and is soothing, cleansing and healing. As positive evidence that catarrh can be cured by the use of NASAL BALM, we submit the following testimonials from among hundreds similar in our possession:—

Mr. Horatio Collier, Woollen Manufacturer, Camerontown, Ont., states; Nasal Balm is the only positive remedy for catarrh that I every used.

Miss Addie Howison, Brockville, Ont. says: I had catarrh for years, my head was so stopped up I could not breathe through my nostrils. My breath was very impure and continually so. Nothing I could get gave me any relief until using Nasal Balm. From the very first it gave me relief and in a very short time had removed the accumulation so that I could breathe freely through the nostrils. Its effect on my breath was truly wonderful, purifying and removing every vestige of the unpleasant odor, which never returned.

D. S. McDonald, Mabou, C.B., writes: Nasal Balm has helped my catarrh very much. It is the best remedy I ever used.

P. H. Munro, Parry Sound, says:—Nasal Balm has no equal as a remedy for cold in the head. It is both speedy and effective in its results.

Mr. John Foster, Raymond, Ont., writes: Nasal Balm acts like a charm for my catarrh. I have only used it a short time and now feel better than at any period during the last seven years. In fact I am sure of a cure and at very small expense.

D. Derbyshire, president of the Ontario Creamery Association, says: Nasal Balm beats the world for catarrh and cold in the head. In my own case it effected relief from the first application.

Mr. John R. Wright, representing Messrs. Evans, Sons and Mason, wholesale druggists, Montreal, says:—Nasal Balm cured me of a long standing case of catarrh after many other remedies failing.

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BY

B. L. FARJEON,

AUTHOR OF "BLADE O' GRASS," "NINE OF HEARTS," "DOCTOR GLENNIE'S
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W. H. COMSTOCK.

DEAR SIR,—MORSE'S INDIAN ROOT PILLS have benefited me wonderfully. For months I suffered from indigestion and headache, was restless at night and had a bad taste in my mouth every morning, after taking one box of the Pills, all these troubles disappeared, my food digested well and my sleep was refreshing. My health is now good.

DANIEL HORAN.

**What Morse's Pills are thought of at
Riverbank, Ont.**

Riverbank, Jan. 31, 1887.

MR. COMSTOCK.

DEAR SIR,—I write to tell you in this section of the country DR. MORSE'S INDIAN ROOT PILLS have a good name. I will give you the names of one or two persons who have used them and are loud in their praises. Mr. Robt. Smith who has been an invalid for many years has tried many medicines for regulating the bowels, but none suited him till he tried MORSE'S INDIAN ROOT PILLS. He says that there was no unpleasant effects after taking them, the action being mild and free from pain.

Mrs. Jas. Gilmour, the mother of a large family, speaks in high terms of the benefit she and her family derived from their use. Mrs. Jas. Hamilton said to me, "I thank you very much for the box of MORSE'S PILLS you recommended me to try when I was so sick. They have made a new woman of me."

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To save Doctor's Bills use Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills. The Best Family Pill in use.

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FLAMENKA.

CHAPTER I.

I COULD not make him out at all. We were sitting at the same little table in the Kaisergarten at Koros, in South-Eastern Hungary, listening to the music, and drinking beer. When I say listening to the music, I mean that we might have been listening : for some chance remark of mine about the fineness of the night, such as would naturally occur to an Englishman, had led us into a talk which interested me of itself, and made me curious about the man. I have a good many tastes and interests, and flatter myself that a more than commonly wandering life has enabled me to hold my own upon most subjects with most people, and to place them easily. But this man fairly baffled me. It was not that his features and appearance were so absolutely commonplace—that is nothing : one does not place people in that way. Anybody may look anyhow : a *chiffonier* like a bishop, and a prince like a butcher's boy. His dress told nothing : he might be a tradesman in his best, or a magnate in mufti—he was one of those people who might

dress as he pleased, and make nobody the wiser. And as for my grand touchstone, his talk, it failed me utterly.

I tried him on music. I set him down, for a whole moment, as a musician. But the talk presently ran into pictures, and convinced me, for a moment and a half, that he was a painter, till we fell upon the ladies' fashions; and behold, he was a man-milliner or nothing. With science, with cookery, with poetry, with book-keeping by double entry; it was all the same. Nor did he air his knowledge, like a man who is vain of knowing something about many things. He had rather a reserved way with him; his information dropped from him as easily as if it were chat about his ailments, or the weather.

I must confess to curiosity about my fellow-creatures. So I craftily led the talk—any talk may always be led anywhere—upon the characteristic notes of different races and callings.

"Now I wonder what you take *me* for?" I asked, as soon as my chance arrived.

"You are an Englishman," he said, without a pause. "Yes; you are certainly an Englishman. But you have not been in England for a long time. Let me see—you must be five-and-thirty; and you left England when you were quite a boy. You were educated in France; you have studied at Jena; since then you have had no settled abode. You are of gentle birth—what we should call noble here. You are unmarried. You are not rich; but you are not troubled about money. You have no profession——"

I felt my eyes opening wider and wider. Every word he had said was as true as if he had added that my name is George Gray.

"And how in the name of fortune-telling do you know all that?" asked I. "Is it a secret—or do you go by rule?"

"Oh, it's simple enough," said he. "Nobody ever quite gets rid of his school and his college; and if a man hasn't the stamp of any profession—and each has its own stamp—it means that he has none to be stamped with. As to money and marriage, they write themselves on every line of every feature. That you are English, and well born, and five-and-thirty, I know by——"

"By——?"

"By your neck," said he, with his eyes fixed just below my chin.

"That is interesting! I never thought of noticing a neck—unless it were a pretty woman's."

"It is simply the most important feature of all. For example, I could tell you a good deal more of yourself than that, if you cared to be told what you doubtless already know. So—you do? Yes; with a neck like that one has a certain interest in thinking and talking of oneself; we needn't go so far as to call it vanity. You are impulsive—too impulsive. You may get into trouble that way. You are apt to leap without looking. You are not a spendthrift, nor a niggard, nor greedy of power. You have caution and prudence—except just when you most want them. You have more to fear from women than from men. Yes—that is the danger point with you."

His eyes were centring upon my throat more and more, till I declare that I had to cough, in order to get rid of a sort of choking tension just where his eyes fell.

"Then do people's necks tell their future as well as their past?" asked I, laughing away a singularly grim impression to be produced by so ordinary-looking a man.

"Surely. When the style or carriage of a neck tells me certain things, I see a scarlet line round it as plainly as——"

He stopped abruptly; I almost thought he started; but his eyes never moved.

"As——"

"Nothing, nothing," said he, nervously. "It is late: I must be going. Good night; good night, Mein Herr."

"Good night, and *au revoir*," said I. "I hope we may meet again."

"Meet again?" he asked, as he rose. "God forbid!" and before I could recover from my surprise at such a form of parting, he had disappeared among the crowd.

"Who is that gentleman?" I asked the waiter, who just then brought me a fresh tankard of ale. "Do you know?"

"The gentleman who was just now sitting here, Mein Herr? Why, of course, I should know Vitéz Boldisár!"

"And who is Vitéz Boldisár? He is Somebody—that is quite clear."

"Somebody! Why, the *Polgari Hohér*—the Town Headsman, Mein Herr!"

CHAPTER II.

THE Town Headsman!

So it was the Town Headsman who had been sitting with his eyes glued to my throat, in that ghastly way, till I felt like choking. No wonder he knew so much about necks; the thought of it made me shudder. And what had he seen about *my* neck that had made him stare at it so queerly, and go off so abruptly?

Had it not been for the sensation of creepiness which he had left behind him, I should have been glad to continue our talk with the knowledge of his calling; for I had never before met an executioner, and I should have liked to add one to my collection of character. As it was, however, I felt relieved by his absence; and just then there floated from the platform where the band was stationed a strain of music that carried Vitéz Boldisár clean out of mind.

It was a troupe of Transylvanian gypsies, who were performing a concert of their own music—that music which is as indescribable in the terms of other music as other music is in the language of colour and form. As a traveller in Hungary it was not new to me; but I had never before so fully felt its peculiar fascination as it trembled or rushed through the whole gamut of human passion, from coquettish allurements to an ecstasy of rage, despair, or joy. The soul that lived in it now danced, now

raged, now longed, now wept, now laughed aloud. I must own to liking my music wild—not to know what is coming next, or how—to pass, as in a full, free life, from surprise into surprise.

I have just said that music such as this, however it may be with other, is out of the reach of colours or words. But, even in the heart of it, I learned that it had a visible likeness, and that its likeness was within a dozen yards.

Of course it was a woman : what else should it be ? And yet it did not seem to be a mere music, but the very music itself which I saw with my eyes while I heard it with my ears.

And does it not follow that, if it was indescribable in language, so was she ? Surely ; for that which creates the sense of attraction or repulsion is just what is the least dependent upon the presence or absence of beauty. It tells nothing to set down this still young woman's glowing eyes, just saved from blackness ; her raven-black hair ; the rich, creamy brownness of her skin ; her almost classically perfect features ; the eloquence of the mouth, even though it was silent ; the stately yet easy poise of the head ; the grace of the whole figure, apparent even while seated—a languid grace, yet conveying, in some inexplicable way, an impression of latent strength, of capacity for impulsive energy. I had seen a thousand women more beautiful in that land of beautiful women. But I had never seen a woman anywhere, in all my wanderings, who so interested one at first sight—if interest be not too weak a word. And, though she had not once glanced in my direction, I felt that she was

conscious of my presence—unless that was only because I was so intensely conscious of hers. From the prosaic point of view, to which all things come at last, I judged her, from her quiet, self-possessed manner, and freedom from anything like finery, to be a *bourgeoise* of the better sort, temporarily parted from her friends, and taking the opportunity to make a flying visit into some romance-land of her own. That she felt the influence of that music even as I myself was feeling it, I knew. Only I had the advantage—while we were both feeling it, I was seeing it as well.

Before the music had quite ceased, she rose, and looked round, as if seeking for her friends. I supposed she perceived them, for she began to move along the path rather quickly. After she had made three or four steps, something fell upon the ground with a tell-tale jingle. I was starting forward to pick it up for her, when, as if he had suddenly sprung out of the air, there darted between us a big fellow, of the build of a Hercules, and the colour of a mulatto, a very gypsy of the gypsies, and forestalled me in picking up the purse—but for his own sake, and not for hers. The lights were not very brilliant just there, the garden was comparatively empty, and the people about were absorbed in the climax of the music, or in themselves, or in one another. Had it not been for me, the thief might have helped himself with the utmost ease.

I could as soon have thought of my own skin, while some ruffian of a Cyclops was plundering a Muse. Before the purse was fairly lifted, his wrist

was in the grasp of my right hand, while his neck was embraced by my left arm. I am reasonably strong, and I had all the advantage, both of attack, of surprise, and of position ; but I might as well have tried to wrest one of his horns from a bull. The neck I embraced was of oak ; the wrist I grasped, of tempered steel. With a spring that told of the practised wrestler, he was upright in a moment ; and it could only have been some bulldog within me that compelled me to hold on. Hold on, however, I did, for the fellow's unexpected strength sent my blood up, and if one does enter into a brawl with a blackguard, one doesn't like to come out of it beaten.

I suppose the battle could have ended in but one way. But a man who is no match for a bull is still less a match for a coward. I felt a blow, which no mere fist could have given, that turned me sick and faint, and my left arm hung helpless by my side. I reeled back against a tree ; and by the time the faintness had passed, the ruffian was gone.

I don't believe the struggle had lasted a minute—not long enough to draw public notice from the final chord of the music ; not what was happening behind her. I don't know whether she had screamed—I fancy not ; at any rate, instead of running away, she was standing close to me, with an look of concern.

"I am afraid you are hurt," she said, in the softest of voices, and the sweetest of tones. "Can I help you ? What can I do ?"

"Oh, never mind for me," said I, not caring to

pose before her as an Englishman who had got the worst of it with a gypsy black—longer than was enough to make the young woman turn to see guard. “I must ask you a thousand pardons for not having been quicker, mademoiselle. I’m afraid your purse is gone. You dropped it ; and——”

“My purse!” she exclaimed, passing her hands rapidly over her dress. “Oh—what in the name of Heaven shall I do! But—I’m a wretch. You *are* hurt—and for *me*! What——”

What else she said, or was going to say, I know not ; for I fainted dead away.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN I next came to myself, it seemed as if I were waking from some unusual vivid and coherent dream. For I was no longer in the Garden, and it was broad day ; while my head was upon a pillow. Yes ; I must have been dreaming hard—uncommonly hard. The lighted gardens, the crowd of people, the strange, dreamlike music, the young woman—so unlike the things one sees and hears when awake ; the headsman and his singular talk, the deadly struggle, and the sudden forgetfulness ; all, taken together, were manifestly the incidents of one of those adventures of the night which seem, while they are fresh, and sometimes for long afterwards, to be ever so much more real than any reality ever seems. I felt exhausted ; and no wonder. But gradually, as my brain grew

clearer, it became conscious of certain things inconsistent with the idea that my dream had been nothing but a dream. For example, I could not remember having gone to bed, or how, supposing I had not really been to the Garden, I had spent the evening. There was a blank of hours to be accounted for. Then—where was I *now*?

I had arrived in the town yesterday morning, and had left my luggage (it was of the lightest), meaning to proceed to-day at any time to Grosswardein. I had not yet taken up my quarters inn, but had spent the afternoon in strolling about the streets and the neighbourhood, and had dined at the *café* attached to the Garden. Nor, when my eyes resumed their duty, did the room in which I lay appear to be that of any inn, even in a country where one always expected too much in the way of comfort when one expected nothing. My bed, of the most depraved German pattern, looked from an alcove across an absolute desert of floor, with an occasional oasis of a common rush-bottomed chair or two here and there. The ceiling was high, and had been elaborately painted with some mythological design; but the colours had become too blotched and faded for me to guess what the subject had been. A cornice of carved oak surmounted the cracked and blackened plaster which covered the walls, and a sculptured marble mantelpiece met the dilapidated ceiling. Signs of past magnificence were throughout in contrast with present squalor. Where was I? What had happened to bring me into this unknown room? For I knew that I was not dreaming—now.

I sat up ; but I was glad to fall back again, for I found myself as weak as I had once been when recovering from a fever. "This won't do," said I, aloud.

"There now—there now, your honour," said a pleasant voice, in German. "It *will* do, if you'll but keep quiet and lie down."

Of course I sat bolt upright. "What is the meaning of all this?" I asked. "Where am I? And who are you?"

"Well, your honour, that's more than I rightly know myself," said a tall young fellow, coming forward, with a pleasant smile. It is true he had no pretensions to good looks, in the ordinary sense, for his nose looked as if had been put on upside down, his mouth was an obtuse-angled triangle, and his skin was a mass of freckles. But his smile was a very pleasant one all the same, and his voice too. He made no attempt to hide his ugliness, for his hair was cropped as close as the shears would go. But for this, he looked, and was dressed, like a peasant of those parts, only with the air of having shouldered a musket in his time.

"Is this a hospital?" I asked again.

"Not a bit of it, your honour. But there—lie down, and don't trouble. It's not to answer questions I'm posted here. And even if it wasn't against orders, I couldn't tell you what I don't know. I'm glad your honour's better, and able to say a sensible word."

"Now look here, my man," said I, "I am not going to lie here on my back without knowing where and why. Is this a gaol?"

"Not a bit of a gaol. But there now—drink up this ; you were to take it as soon as you began to take notice——"

"Oh, then I am in the hands of a doctor ? How long have I been here ?

"Not a bit of a doctor."

"Very well. Then if—if I'm neither in a hospital, nor a gaol, nor a madhouse, I'm my own master, and I'll get up. Give me my clothes."

The young fellow shook his head. "No, your honour," said he, firmly. "I'd do it and welcome, if 'twas in my orders. But——"

"It is in your orders," said I. "You will take your orders from me. Or have I fallen among thieves ?" I asked ; not very prudently, perhaps, supposing the by no means unlikely notion turned out to be true.

"Not a bit," he answered, not in the least offended. "Whatever was in your honour's pockets is in them still ; as, being my orders, of course it has to be."

"I suppose I may at least ask what your orders are."

"And welcome, your honour."

"What are they, then ?"

"Just to stand guard, and make you drink this when you took notice, and if your honour asks a question, just to hold my tongue."

So good-humouredly resolute was he, and so comical was the set of his nose, that I could not help smiling in spite of my growing anger. And he gave me the cup with such an air of being under orders and presenting arms, with his chin up, and

his heels well together, that I took it obediently. I suppose it was some sort of tisane, or febrifuge ; it had a peculiar, but not unpleasant, aromatic flavour, and almost immediately afterwards gave me a sense of infinite refreshment, such as I never received from any other draught, before or since. It seemed to send a fragrant coolness through all my veins ; it made me feel like a healthy child who has slept dreamlessly the whole night through, save for a slight lingering of weakness, which, however, had become a pleasure instead of a pain :—

“ To him are opening Paradise.”

I quoted aloud.

“ Now, by the Powers !” cried my attendant, in what would have been English but for as broad a brogue as was to be found in the whole kingdom of Kerry—“ by all the blessed Powers, and twenty more, if your honour don’t be talking my own mother tongue !”

“ And my own too !” said I. “ What—you’re an Irishman ?”

“ And how’d your honour be guessing that, now ? But an Irishman I am, from Tralee. And ’tis like a sup o’ potheen to hear a Christian tongue again. And oh, your honour, but to let my own tongue loose in that same—’tis all one with unbucklin’ after parade . . . wh—h—ew !” I wish I could do justice to the way in which my nurse, gaoler, keeper, whatever he was, inflated his chest and then slowly sent forth a huge sigh of relief, as if from pain.

“ Fancy tumbling across an Irishman here ! One

would as soon expect to come across a Magyar in Tralee."

"Not a bit of it, your honour," said he, all his military reserve swept away. "'Tis nothing out of the common at all. A boy must be somewhere; and sure one place is all one with another when it isn't at home. You see I'd got into a bit of trouble—I never could make out, meself, just what it would be, barrin' 'twas mixed up all in a mess with the pike practice, and a colleen, and a bit of a still that some o' the boys had got up behind the hills, and another trifle or two. Ireland's not the place, your honour, for a boy that only wants to live aisy and be let alone; and if he won't be let, sure, if trouble comes, and he shows a dacent spirit, the blame's to them that won't let him."

"But how in the name of fortune did you turn up here?"

"Faith, your honour, I hardly know that meself. You see I'd gone off with a cutter where I knew the skipper, that was my father's own brother's nephew, being Jim Connell of Tralee. Bound for Spain we were, but things got mixed up again, what with the wind, and a King's ship that wouldn't mind her own business, and one thing and another; so being bound, your honour, as I said, for Spain, we were near being introduced to Davy Jones in the Bay of Biscay, as they call it, though 'tis divvle a patch on the Bay of Tralee; and I'd have been talkin' to your honour at the bottom of the say this minute if I and Jim and another of us hadn't been taken off by a French schooner that was passing that way. Where she

was bound for I didn't rightly know ; but it didn't matter, seeing that we were towed into Tunis by them Turks of Algerines. And Jim turned Turk himself ; though how he found the conscience to swear off every drop of the drink I'll never know. As for meself, the galley I was rowing in got caught too ; and being one day in a place they call Trieste, with nothing but me own self on my hands, I just tuk service with the Impress Queen and wore the white coat in a regiment of Grenadiers ; and maybe I'd be wearing it still if it hadn't had a bullet through it in a bit of a brush with the enemy ; and since then I've done whatever came handy. I came here with a quack doctor, but I didn't go further, because of a little difference we had—one can't keep on with an *omad-haun* that won't shake hands with y' in the morning, when your own self's clane forgot that y've had to knock'm down the night before."

"You seem to have been making a life of it. And what are you doing with yourself now ?"

"Well, your honour, and that's hard to say. At this present I'm assistant to a fencing master."

"You're a good swordsman, then ?"

"With them bodkins of small swords, as they call'm ? I wouldn't demane myself. But I'm a divvle to sweep a floor."

It was evident I had come across a character as well as an Irishman—a vagabond, no doubt, but apparently an honest one. I had a fair experience of vagabonds—was I not something of a vagabond myself?—and there is no other class in which a little fellow-feeling is so good a talisman against

being deceived by appearance. You must be a vagabond to get at a vagabond ; but if you are one, though ever so little, your path to him is as straight as the flight of a crow.

"Then this is a fencing school?" I asked.

"Divvle a bit of that, either."

"And you will answer no questions?"

"Nor a bit of a one. 'Tis what I'm here for, to hold my tongue, and, faith, I'm doing it hard. But," he suddenly added, with a demure gravity more comical than his smile, "there's no orders against me telling you whatever ye'd like to be told of me own accord. I was to answer no questions ; so, of course, there's nothing to keep me from telling, without being questioned, whatever I'll plaze."

I was, for once, wise in my generation. So far from asking another question, I did not even look one. I could see that, now he had got his tongue in, I was not more eager to hear than he to tell.

"Yes, your honour," he went on ; "'tis for four nights I've been standing guard over ye—me and the lady that's given me the job, and been doctoring of your honour with her own hands. 'What's your name, my man?' says she, as well as they can in their Magyar. 'Phil Dwyer, from Tralee,' says I, as near as *I* can in the same. 'Here's a gentleman been hurt in the garden,' says she ; 'and if them blaggards of police—' 'Oh, your ladyship,' says I, 'if 'tis bothering the police ye're after, I'm your man ; for sure 'tis the crame of blaggards they are intirely.' So, after we'd colloqued a bit, we brought ye here between the three of us, with the help of glory and a sedan ; and then, 'Phil Dwyer,'

says she, 'will ye earn the worth of a job?' 'Faith, and I'll that,' says I. 'Have ye ever looked after a sick man?' says she. 'Hundreds,' says I; and that's true as true, what with my last place being with a doctor. 'All right,' says she. 'You look after this one, and if I'm content with the way you do it, 'twill be worth your while.' And then—here I've been, your honour; and that's all."

"All? It's very strange."

"Not a bit. One job's all one with another. 'Inshallah,' as they say in Tunis—which manes 'tis all in the day's work, and there ye are. I've done many an odder job than this; and I never care to get to the bottom of 'em. They're all one when you get there—all as like as a pair of pays. 'Tis always made up of four things, like a bowl of punch—two boys and a colleen, and a taste of usquebaugh. Your honour may mix different, but the materials are the same, like me old master the doctor's pills. I'm glad your honour's got sensible: for y've been that way talking that I didn't like it at all."

"What did I talk about?"

"Why, about chopping off people's heads. And that's a bad sort of a drame. And 'twas all about other people's heads, never your own."

Of course that was natural enough, considering what my last talk had been before I had fainted; and I had other things to think of than my gruesome acquaintance, Vitéz Boldisár. It was clear that my other acquaintance of that evening had not yet come to an end; and I must own that I was less anxious for an immediate restoration to health and

freedom than I had been some twenty minutes ago. Mr. Philip Dwyer was neither the most intelligent nor the most intelligible of story-tellers. But I could make out that the young lady—it could be no other—had recognised that I had been wounded in her service, had shown her gratitude by taking charge of a homeless and helpless stranger, and had done so with discretion and secrecy, as not knowing whether, in the case of an unknown traveller, they might not be needful. It must certainly be all pure kindness, and charity—she could not have anything to gain, or any special interest in one whom she had never seen in his senses. Common gratitude demanded that I should not run away, even if Mr. Dwyer should permit me, without at least a “Thank you, madam.” Common self-respect and civility, that I should leave with her the best impression I could of one who perhaps owed his life to her care. And common curiosity—well, that also had its place in the brew, as Mr. Dwyer might have put it.

“For indeed, your honour,” my attendant was running on, while I but half-listened with more than half-closed eyes, “it isn’t pleasing to hear of such things when one’s seen the thing done. Yes, I *have* seen it—once, your honour; and I’d sooner tackle ten Turks with my own bare fist, than see it again. ’Tis such a cold-blooded job. ’Twas here I saw it, and I never go through the market-place without seeming to see the scaffold, and the *Hohér*, as they call Jack Ketch over here, with his sword, and the man in the chair, as if he was going to be shaved with a razor a yard long—and so he is, sure,

so that he'll never want the barber again. Of course, hanging's all right—that's what everybody's used to ; but there's something about cold steel in cold blood that makes one's own crawl. . . .

He was as fine a boy, him in the chair, as ever I saw out of Kerry ; over six foot, and looking as brave and proud as a lion, and handsome enough to turn the head of a Queen. No, your honour. I don't know what he'd been up to. That was no business of mine—mine was chopping wood just then ; and faith, 'twas what I saw made me give up the chopping and take to sweeping floors. Whatever he'd been up to, 'twas nothing mane. Erdélyi Sándor—that was what they called him, anyhow ; and it don't do to think too much of a boy that's had to take to the hills, with the red-coats after him—lasteways, 'tis the white-coats here ; but 'tis all one. I've been there meself, in the hills of Dunkerrin, And, of course, there was the colleen—and——”

“ Ah ! And what became of her ? ” I asked, idly enough, and still but half hearing.

“ Of the girl they call Flamenka ? Divvle a bit of me knows. There was a lot of talk of her at the time, one way and another. May be she'll be dead ; may be she'll have taken up with some other boy. 'Tis a way they've got with 'em—in Kerry, anyhow,” he sighed, without ceasing to smile. . . . “ Well, your honour, he wouldn't even have his eyes bound, but he looked that murdering ruffian, Vitéz, as straight in the eyes as I'm looking at your honour ; and then, One—two—three ; and—Swish . . . But whisht—talking of colleens——”

CHAPTER IV.

It had not been lively conversation wherewith to entertain a man in my case ; and there seemed a sort of fatality about the manner in which I was being haunted by suggestions of the scaffold since I had been in Koros. However, they could not concern so commonplace a traveller as I ; and the reappearance of my fair physician naturally scattered all other speculations to the winds. It was annoying to have to receive her with no better toilette than my cloak, thrown over me by my well meaning but not very expert valet. But I had not time to make one, even if I had had the means ; for she was here.

Mr. Philip Dwyer struck his heels together, and gave her a military salute, which she returned both gracefully and graciously—much more like a Princess than the *bourgeoise* I had originally set her down for. She looked at me anxiously ; and then her face—it certainly was a very expressive one—quite lighted up with relief.

“ *Hála Istennek* (Thank God) ! ” she exclaimed ; and then, in German, “ I’m very glad. You will get well now ! ”

Even now, without the glamour of the lamplight, and of the music which had seemed to belong to her—nay, to be part of her—she was a strikingly handsome woman. Not many would have called her beautiful ; but the few who thought her

beautiful at all would have held her to be beautiful indeed. It now struck me that there was something Oriental about her—not in the way which is common enough among the Magyars of those parts, but in a way of her own; neither Ottoman nor Hebrew, but what I should imagine might be very high caste Indian. The contrast between her and Mr. Dwyer, as they stood by my bedside, was never to be forgotten.

"What in the world shall I say to you, madame?" was all I could find to say. "It seems I owe my life to you. . . . I suppose there are words of thanks for that in some language; but I don't know what they are."

"Ah, you think life so dear, so well worth keeping?" she asked, not lightly, or cynically, as such words are commonly spoken, but seriously, even eagerly, as if I were saying something that pleased her. "I am glad, very glad, that you do not want to die. . . . No, please don't trouble about finding words that are not wanted. You are quite right; there is no language in which one can express—anything; any least thing one feels. . . . Besides, it is for me to thank you; a very empty purse was not worth risking a man's life for. Of course, if it had been full, why then . . . But I'm not talking like a physician," she said, with a smile. "But then it is true I need not, any more. You are well: you have nothing to do but to get strong."

I already felt that there was something strange about this young woman, altogether. I could no more class her, or place her, than I had been able

to class or place Vitéz Boldisár, the headsman. I was thinking how I could best put a question or two without forgetting the consideration she had shown for the possible secrecy of my own affairs, when——

“I see you are dying of curiosity,” said she, with another of her smiles. “And so am I—to know what you take *me* for. Of course it does not follow that I shall tell you, whether you guess right or wrong.”

“Of course not. Very well—I take you for some great, good, and wise princess, who has stepped out of one of the Arabian Nights—a princess of the good genii. I can’t remember their names. Mine is Gray—George Gray.”

“Indeed?” she asked. “Then, if your name is that, mine is András Mári,” she said, lightly—of course putting her Christian name last, as is the custom of that country. Only András Mári—Mary Andrew; not much of a name for a princess of genii: but it sounded, somehow, better as she spoke it than it looks when written. For she certainly had a singularly musical voice—very soft, as well as bright and clear. I should have liked to hear my own name spoken in that voice! I am sure it would have sounded common-place no longer.

It strikes me, however, that the voice of András Mári is required to redeem from common-placeness other things than my own name. In the remainder of our talk that morning there was none of the romance which seemed to have dogged through life the footsteps of the exceedingly unromantic

and unappreciative Mr. Dwyer. She chatted quite easily and pleasantly, saving me all the trouble of talking, but telling me very little. What was really the chief event of that morning was the momentary absence of my nurse and valet, and his re-appearance with the wing of a fowl and a bottle of red wine. Mine must have been rather a curious kind of illness, or else my physician must have had secrets concerning the treatment of dagger-wounds unknown to the faculty; for my strength, both of body and mind, was returning with perceptible rapidity; minutes appeared to be doing the ordinary work of days. I was almost ashamed of the good breakfast I made. I had not yet passed out of the age of vanity—if anybody ever does—and I could not contrive to feel that I looked interesting while propped up on what the Germans call a bed, I was eating and drinking, wrapped in an old cloak, and all unkempt and unshorn.

"One would think you must have had a large practice," I said, "both in surgery and in physic too."

"One gets it, in country places. Ah, some of our old peasant-women are better doctors than you would find in Buda. That draught which I left to be given you if you came to yourself, was taught me by an old woman who knew the use of every herb that grows; and yet she could not have told you the name, in any language, of one of them. She had secret names for them, handed down with their uses from mother to daughter, ever since the beginning of the world."

"Indeed!"

"And not only could she cure any hurt or sickness that herbs are allowed to cure, but she could give by the same drugs, or different ones, almost any harm that she pleased. She taught me a great deal ; but *you* need not be afraid."

"It sounds terribly like witchcraft," I could not help saying.

"Ah—my old master ; he was the doctor," said Mr. Dwyer. "He could give you any mortal ailment you had a fancy for, from the gout to the mazels, by just telling you you had it ; and he had a pill that he could suit to any of them, just by putting it into a box with the proper name. And even when I once made a bit of a mistake, and labelled a box for corns instead of for toothache, we never heard it did any harm But then, maybe, the patient had the corns as well."

When András Mári ended her visit, as she did soon afterwards, I did not seem to care to realise that, if anything, I knew rather less about her, and about where I was, and all the rest, than before she came into the room. Perhaps the virtue of my waking potion was beginning to wear off, or the excitement of my adventure had tired me little, or my breakfast had made me comfortably sleepy. In any case my mind was running rather upon my physician herself than upon what might be her history or her surroundings. Now, I am by no means a submissive person, given to taking things for granted or letting them slide. I like to know what I am about, and to comprehend the things that happen to me even when I cannot control them. But the thought of this woman seemed to

have become sufficient for me—to have become occupation enough even if I should remain where I was for weeks to come without knowing, or caring to know, where. Of course, the reader who is versed in romances, and whom experience has taught what to look for when a man under forty and a woman under thirty have been brought together, will judge according to the accepted rule. But I had not lost my heart to her; and I had lost it often enough in my time to know when that happens. I had nearly lost my life in her service; she had saved mine; and I was otherwise so interested in her that there was no knowing what might happen, if——. But then there were a great many hundred ifs; and I had not the faintest fancy for throwing my life and liberty away without plenty of good cause. And so long as one reasons like that, so long as one admits a single If, one is in no immediate peril.

No doubt a good deal of what I took for thinking was made up of dreaming and half dreaming. At any rate, I lay there for a good many hours in wonderful content, as if with merely being alive. Yes—she had been right; she had done me a real service in saving for me so precious a thing as we know life, bare life, to be when we have narrowly escaped losing it. And then I had so much more than bare existence—hundreds of interests and sufficient means to indulge them within reason; plenty of time before me, and a natural capacity for enjoyment. The idea of my making an unknown woman a present of my life as her fee for saving it! That would be madness on the face of

it. And yet she seemed to have created the very atmosphere in which I lay ; and I would not have changed it, even to give that big gypsy a thorough thrashing.

I cannot say that I got tired of my thoughts or dreams (whichever they were). But reading is one of my habits ; and I missed a book, if none was within my reach, as a smoker would miss his pipe. So, towards dusk, I said to Mr. Dwyer :

"Is there, by chance, such a thing as a book to be got at here ? Any will do, from 'Mother Goose' to the Dictionary."

"A book is it, your honour ? Faith, that's odd now, seeing I've got the whole stock of me old master, the doctor, in the book-line. He owed me a few florins when we parted company, so I kept hold of this instead of 'em. 'Tis but few books for a learned doctor, to be sure, seeing there's but one. But then, 'tis a big one."

"Well, a book's a book. I suppose reading's not against orders ?"

"Not much need of orders against reading a book like that," said he, producing from out the dusky vastness of the room a thick and heavy quarto, well dog's-eared and battered, and bound in greasy and beer-stained vellum. It looked as if it might be entertaining as a curiosity. So I had a candle lighted, fixed the volume against my knees for a desk, and opened the pages, while Mr. Dwyer occupied himself with mending his clothes and softly whistling a *potpourri*.

No, it was not an entertaining book. But it was as odd as it was dull, and as dull as it was

crack-brained (which is saying a great deal), and had very likely been the *vade mecum* of physicians of some pretension a couple of centuries ago. It professed to be the work of one Barochus Florentinus, Body Physician to the King of Cappadocia ; and of all the crazy stuff I ever read it was the craziest, despite its black-letter pedantry. There might any Doctor Dulcamara of to-day learn jargon enough to last him a lifetime, and to furnish him with a whole stock-in-trade. From Barochus Florentinus might he learn how to banish warts into the Red Sea by a tincture of agrimonium (whatever that may be), distilled in the third hour of the moon ; how to cure a wound by anointing the weapon that did the hurt (I wonder how that would have answered in my own case!) ; how to make a candle which, when lighted, would cause the air to swarm with flies ; and various other matters, some silly, some ghastly, but all alike solemnly dull. Then followed a tractate on the raising of corpses ; and I resolved that, if ever I tried the experiment, it should not be upon the body of Baruch the Florentine. Then I lighted upon a recipe for procuring sleep—as if any were needed with that volume in one's possession. And the volume was nearly proving a better prescription than the compound of spiders' brains and pounded bezoar-stone which it gave, when yet another recipe caught my eye, this time with a suggestion of romance in it, to give it a somewhat better flavour. And it was certainly a coincidence that I should light upon that particular passage just there and then :—

“Among these Egyptians” (I translate freely) “certain of the sorceresses know how to concoct a potion of herbs, whereof the properties are: For if by any contrivance a person can be procured to drink a measure of it fasting, and after sleep, he is straightway made altogether subject unto her upon whom he shall first look thereafter, in such wise as were he truly fascinate by the method of the eye. Of such sort were the love philtres of the ancients, whereof I shall prescribe the several and particular concoction under their proper title. That which is practised by these Egyptian sorceresses, I do utterly refuse to set forth, nor shall it be drawn from me even by the most cruel torments. And for this cause, that it would be altogether abominable, and unworthy of any respectable physician, to enable vain and evil-minded women to have more power over the minds and souls of men than hath come to them from Eve. I have myself employed this concoction, with an effect altogether admirable, where the end was such that the method was justified. But it shall not be upon my conscience to impart so singular a secret, lest it should not be employed in good faith; and, above all, lest it should be practised by that most execrable, infamous, abominable, and monstrous race of charlatans who have taken their impudent and despicable degrees at the University of Salernum; thereby selling their wizened and worthless souls for fees, so that Diabolus himself is cheated into buying what is not worth having. It is a property of this potion that neither old age nor ill favour stands in the way of its operation; though the sorceresses

themselves say, and I have proved by experiment, that where the woman on whom the patient's eye first falls is young and well favoured, the effect of the medicine is somewhat more swift, if not more sure."

Was the old quack talking to me out of his grave to warn me against taking physic before breakfast? Well, it only showed how much colour a little imagination, helped by a solemn style and the magic of black letter—no wonder they burned Doctor Faustus for a wizard!—may throw upon any transaction one pleases. And it also showed Barochus Florentinus in a more simply human light than all the rest of his volume put together. His scrupulous conscience; his suggestion that, nevertheless, he might be induced, under special circumstances, to relax his austerity; his healthy and whole-hearted abuse of his orthodox rivals; his touching inconsistency in declining to give a single philtre in one part of the work, while promising to give all that were known to the ancients in another. I looked through the volume to find them. But Barochus Florentinus was far too cunning to fulfil such a promise as that. No doubt the old rascal's conscience had so completely overpowered him, that anybody wanting such an article would have to apply to the physician himself at first hand, and obtain the concoction of the Egyptian sorceresses for good cause, and for a proportionate fee. The Egyptian sorceresses—what were they like? I wondered. Certainly, had I been a painter, and had wanted to illustrate the works of Barochus Florentinus, András Mári would

have served for as good a model as if—as if I had not been reading myself to sleep with nonsense only fit for Bedlam.

CHAPTER V.

IT would be long to tell how my acquaintance ripened with András Mári at a rate altogether out of proportion with the growth of my knowledge of her. She seemed to have a certain delicacy about inquiring into my affairs ; and so, of course, I felt doubly bound not to be curious about hers, while, on the other hand, her reticence about herself increased my own natural reserve. It is true I had nothing to conceal, but she might ; and if I had talked much about myself, it would look like fishing. Was I, perhaps, a little afraid of what I might find below a singularly fascinating surface, if I should rashly inquire too deeply ? I cannot tell, for the time came very quickly when I ceased to speculate about her consciously. It is one of the chief pleasures of a wandering life, to my mind, that one can take the people one comes across for just what they seem, and so get the best even of people with whom fixed relations would be impossible or unendurable. So, during my convalescence, I accepted András Mári as the chief fact of my life for the time, without looking forward, or worrying myself about her past ; and the less inasmuch as, the more I saw of her, the more certain I became that, whatever her history had

been, it was nothing which she had the slightest reason to be ashamed of or to hide. It was natural, and to her credit, that she should be reticent with an unknown stranger, like me ; and her frankness and good comradeship were such as one instinctively associates with truth, and with superiority to evil. Granting this, there was nothing so very out of the way, after all, in the bare fact that she should be as much alone in the place as I. The town is the business centre of its neighbourhood ; and she might easily have affairs there, legal perhaps, requiring her personal attention.

However, if we scarcely talked at all about ourselves, we found no lack of interests in common. There was music, for example : that music which she had visibly realised to me, and continued to realise, both with her voice and her mind, more and more. I have known many persons with whom music was a passion ; but none, save her, with whom it was a part of being ; with whom it was to the spirit what the breath is to the body. Mostly cold in manner, her whole self seemed to light up and glow when—as I could see and feel—she was recalling, or perhaps making, the music of her own soul. I got to know and to watch for such times.

It was indeed a strange life that I came to lead, and it would have been incredible but for that curious condition of mind which I have already tried to describe, and which intensified as time went on. I was absolutely content to live the life of a recluse, counting only the hours of Mári's visit, and killing, or rather patiently ignoring, those that

came between. Of course, I knew that this state of things must come to an end at last ; but I never thought of when or how. The idea of time seemed to have lost its meaning. I must have been in some unnatural condition ; and yet it did not seem to me in the least strange. Nor did it seem to appear strange to Mr. Dwyer, who, in the delightful manner of his fellow-countrymen, had constituted himself my valet, without any sort of formal engagement, and who came and went rather at his own convenience than at mine. It is difficult to explain the state of things. When Mári was not present, it seemed like a dream. It was as if she were becoming the one real thing in the world.

Of course it will have been gathered that my convalescence did not advance with strides as rapid at the first, or no doubt air and exercise and a traveller's daily interests would have helped me towards a more healthy and active state of mind—at any rate I should have found the desire to break through what I might, had I been superstitious, have taken for effects of some such witches' brew as Barochus Florentinus was so careful not to describe. Details, meanwhile, arranged themselves. The room where I lived—it was large and airy enough, in all conscience—was on the second story of one of those decayed old houses in the Régi Város, or Old Town, which are let into innumerable apartments ; and my luggage was brought thither by Mr. Dwyer, who seemed to find a pleasure, independently of any prospective profit, in taking every sort of trouble off my hands.

I have shown how it was that we kept singularly clear of personal matters, considering that we were man and woman thrown together in so intimate a fashion, and with the debt of life between us. Nevertheless, there were lapses now and again; and one of them I remember very clearly indeed. We were upon our favourite theme, that of music; and I was saying, in the enthusiasm which had been growing under the influence of her more than enthusiasm, how one might be content to let all the rest of life go, with all its hopes and all its pleasures, if one could keep that world of music in which alone souls and spirits rise above bodies and minds, and are, without dying, as free as nothing else but death can make them.

"Then you do really think that life is a thing to be glad of?" she asked, a little inconsequently. "You wish to live; you are glad that I did not let you die?" Nor did she ask it as a mere idle question, but as one upon which something of moment hung.

"Life is always something to be glad of and to keep," I said in my wisdom, "whether one enjoys it or no. And I am so glad of mine that I should be content if this life were to go on—to go on always, as it is now."

She sighed; she appeared to be in an altogether new mood. "I was afraid you might have been sorry," she said, "that I called you back again. You are sure you are glad—quite, quite sure?"

"What a question! Surely you do not mean to say that you—you of all women—would think being saved from death an injury?"

"No. Not yet. I have something to do still. It is about you I am thinking, Herr—Gray."

"Then, if it is only of me you are thinking, you may be quite sure. I am so glad to be alive, only alive, that—in short, I look upon my life as yours. And that is not only a form of words. I feel it to be yours, more than my own."

"Take care what you are saying," she said. "Suppose I were to take you at your word!"

She spoke so seriously that I could not help smiling.

"I mean it," said I (perhaps not quite truly). "You see, you are no common physician, and I can't offer you any common fee."

"Suppose I were to exact a fee, then, of my own? Would you pay it, whatever it might be? Would you promise to pay it blindly, and then——"

"Keep my word? Of course I would," I could only say; a little anxiously, however, for there was a sort of eager triumph in her voice that made me think there must be something behind her words. "I am one of those uncomfortable people, you must know, who can't endure being debtors——"

I could not imagine what there was in so commonplace a remark—which, I suppose, thousands of people have made before me in the full belief that they were making it for the first time—to affect her; but that it did was certain. She almost started, and seemed about to say something, but as suddenly to change her mind. She rose from her seat, however (she had a very languid way of sitting), and walked rapidly to the far end of the room and back before saying——

"Yes ; then I, too, am one of those uncomfortable people. I also believe in kindness for kindness, love for love, and—life for life."

I wish I could describe the manner of her saying it ; if there was a suggestion of the stage, both in her voice and in her attitude, it was in a manner which we very seldom see upon the stage, but which, when we do, we recognise at once for the expression of true passion. Had I been an *impresario* I would have engaged her then and there. As things were, I only felt that it might be as well for me to let friendship advance no further. I have no taste for tragic women—at least off the stage.

"Well, thank Heaven," said I, "there is no debt except of kindness between us two. And I am glad you understand how hard it is to be a debtor in that way, because you will help me to repay you whenever the chance comes. You won't be one of those horrible creditors who will never let themselves be repaid."

"Ah, no creditor shall be like that to me ! I was afraid you were different. I was afraid you were one of those people who would never pay his worst enemy out even for the most cruel wrong——"

"I was talking of gratitude, not of vengeance," said I.

"And what is the difference ?" she asked, a little scornfully. "Gratitude is vengeance for good ; vengeance is gratitude for evil. They are both the same."

What was one to say to that ? I was not in orders ; and I had a strong suspicion that András Mári, now for the first time talking without a veil

over her mind, would not have heeded me had I been at that disadvantage. I could only remain silent and grave.

"Why don't you speak?" she asked, impatiently; I could hear the quick working of one of her feet upon the floor. "I don't believe in people who will pay one sort of debt and not another. You say you want to repay me for saving your life—and I have saved it; you would have been dead days ago but for me. Would you not want to repay me if I had let you live—what people call living, but had murdered your heart, your spirit, your soul——"

"Mári," was all I could say, taking her hand for the first time, and keeping it as I spoke, "we don't know much of each other; most likely we never shall. But, if you don't want me to know that somebody has done you some terrible wrong, and that you are seeking for vengeance upon him, say no more To answer you would be to counsel you; and, without knowing everything, that I cannot and will not do. Only—as between you and me—I won't even consider the question of anything but kindness and gratitude. No—I would not take vengeance in such a case as that. What would be the good, if one's heart, and spirit, and soul, were dead and gone?"

"None, of course," she said, sharply, and almost snatching her hand away, as if she had only just noticed that it was in mine. "There," she said, with a sudden change of manner, "we have been talking very sad nonsense. We won't talk any more So you say you would repay the

smallest kindness, but not the greatest wrong. And I don't believe you——"

"Will you give me the first chance of proving it to you that you can find?"

"I promise nothing," said she. "No doubt we shall be quits—some day. For the present, I must go."

"Till to-morrow?" I held out my hand again, by way of *au revoir*. But she did not take it; and it was then I noted that hers had never once touched mine except that once before she so abruptly snatched it away.

"Till to-morrow And you are not afraid of my fee?" she asked, lightly, and yet without a smile.

"So little, that you may make it what you will. And if it is to help you, all the better. You have told me enough to let me see that you may need help——"

"And you promise that, without even knowing who or what I am?"

"Of course. What can that matter? You did not wait to know who or what I am, before burdening yourself with a stranger. I want to help you, even as you have helped me."

"I knew what I was doing; you are promising you know not what. Suppose I were to demand your whole estate, what should you say then? There are women who would do that——"

"You wouldn't be much the richer. That wouldn't be much; I should only have to work for my bread, and that would mean getting a better."

"You don't care for money, then? Is there nothing you care more for than life—nothing in the world?"

"Nothing that I can think of just now, except things that life is needful for; such as to help you, if ever you want me. . . . Shall not that be a bargain? Mári, won't you take my hand on that?"

But she did not seem to hear me, and had left me for that day with more food for thought of her than ever. That she had a history was clear; was I being drawn into it, even to the loss of my will?

To-morrow duly came, and as duly brought Mári. Without her visit it would not have seemed like a day at all. But there was no approach to a return of that vague talk of yesterday. Its impression was upon me, and therefore may have been, in like manner, upon her also; and it was, perhaps, for this very reason that it was tacitly avoided. She was even gay, as if she had heard good news. But every now and then her gaiety, when at its brightest, would be suddenly clouded by a sigh, or by a look in her eyes so wistful that it almost brought tears into my own. And then, just when my heart was the most keenly aching to give her life some of the help I was sure it needed, the sigh would cease, and the look would pass, and she would seem like a woman without a care, or else like a woman with so many that she had grown reckless of them all. . . . And as to who or what she was, I had by this time altogether ceased to care a straw. . . . Had I, in truth, been giving her my life for her fee? And, if so, how was it going to end? Nay, rather, how was it going to begin?

CHAPTER VI.

"Your honour," said Phil Dwyer, while he was brushing my clothes the morning after that, "I've been thinking—which is never worth while but now and then—and what I've been thinking is that y'd be the better for a mouthful of fresh air."

"Fresh air?"

"Of course. Not that the air here's as fresh as it might be, but 'tis better than none."

"But——" It was such a new idea to me that I should do anything but wait for Mári, that it seemed as if he had suddenly proposed a flight over the moon for a change.

"Mr. Gray," said Phil, putting his heels together, and facing me as if on parade, "'tis as plain as the pikestaff on my face that if ye don't pull yourself together, y'll never be a bit the better till ye die. 'Tis all well enough to have a woman to fuss over a man when he can't fuss over himself; but there's not the woman in life that can fuss over a man half as well as he can fuss over his own self as soon as he can fuss at all. I've taken a liking to your honour, and I'm not going to see a gentleman that's nearer an Irishman than I've met since I was in Tunis, wasted to the shadow of a bone for the want of a drop of air. There," said he, throwing open the window, "that's the way to dale with *you*. And now, your honour, come along. 'Tisn't so often as St. Tib's Eve that I put my foot into where

a colleen's put hers. 'Tis the wakest to the wall ; and 'tis never the woman's the wakest, between man and man. But that's no rayson for a man to let himself be made waker than he's bound to be ; and y'll need your strength before long, I've been thinking, if ye mane to hold your own. I've known 'em in Kerry, your honour ; and one knows 'em everywhere, if one knows 'em *there*."

Well, why not ? Why should I not realise that I still had left me some sort of will of my own ? I was not in prison ; I had the use of my limbs ; I had nothing to do but to pass through a door and down a flight of stairs in order to prove that my soul was still in my own keeping. Yet the thought felt almost like a temptation to commit a sin ; as if, before stirring hand or foot, I had to wait the orders of András Mári. No doubt a sharp illness is often followed by a similar lethargy, which requires for its conquest more energy than seems credible when it has once been conquered and forgotten ; but then it is of yielding to it that one is ashamed, not of breaking through.

I verily believe that the fact of my going out for the first time that morning is a greater proof of the influence she had gained over me than if I had stayed indoors. A slave who is conscious of his slavery, and who goes through a ~~form~~ of asserting his freedom, knowing, and in his secret heart preferring, that it shall be vain, is more really a slave than the one who takes his condition as a matter of course. A bird which hops out upon the table in the certainty of presently returning to his cage is far more a captive than the one which will not

go out because it knows that, if it did, it would never return.

So, with Phil Dwyer for my companion and guide, I went out into the sunshine, feeling like an owl in the daylight. I had never seen the Régi Város, or Old Town, before ; and its lanes, almost Oriental in their narrowness, and picturesquely barbaric in their architecture, made all that had happened to me since I had arrived in Koros yet more dreamlike than if I had stayed in my room. And then the costumes and the vehicles about made outer life itself seem unreal to my unaccustomed eyes.

Suddenly we emerged from a lane so narrow that its many-storied houses almost shut out the daylight, into an irregular square, which was evidently the market-place of the town. And then, said Phil Dwyer, pointing before him with his hand,

"There, your honour ; that's just where it happened. And I was standing, worse luck, just where you're standing now."

"What happened ?"

"The beheading of Erdélyi Sándor. I wish I hadn't come here ; for if I shut me eyes I can see it all over again ; and somehow, your honour, me feet always get drawn here, whichever way I'm going. 'Tis queer, isn't it ? For I've seen men fall by me own side in fair fighting, companions in arms, too, and never thought of them after. If he'd lived, he'd have been the boy to serve under ; and I've a good mind I'd have done it too."

"Under a brigand ?"

"Ah, your honour, 'tis aisy calling names. I've

known boys called smugglers, and pirates, and rapparees, and worse than that, that was divvle a bit worse than them that misnamed them, and may be a trifle better."

"Yes; I remember your story. And didn't you say there was some girl——"

"Oh, her they called Flamenka? Of course there'd be a girl; and of course she'd be no good at all, when the real trouble came. If she'd been worth the salt to her tail, she'd have brought the boys down to save their captain, like another once didn't in Kerry; but 'tis all one they are. 'Tis Mistress Maguire she'll be by now—bad cess to the spalpeen."

"Flamenka—Mistress Maguire?"

"Now, that's good! Sure your honour'll be better already, if joking's a sign. Mistress Maguire—that'll be the colleen that was in it at Tralee. But 'tis all one they are—every one of a sex that'll marry a Maguire. Don't trust 'em, your honour—no, not one. They'll lade a boy into trouble; and when he's in it they'll lave him there, and take up with the first spalpeen that can keep a cow," he added, with a beaming smile.

I had formed my own opinion as to the amount of blame due to a girl who preferred a decent Maguire that kept a cow, to so evidently hopeless a scapegrace as my friend Phil. However, it was not the season for a lecture—if it ever is; nor was I in a sympathetic mood. Besides, I was a little tired, after my long disuse of exercise; and if I was not sympathetic, Phil was. We were at the entrance of a café, or some such place; so, moved

by the same silent impulse, we entered, sat down, and called for beer.

Our fellow guests were some half dozen fellows of the peasant class—swarthy, long-haired, and wild looking; probably they had been attending the market, and were taking a holiday. In any other country they might well have passed for banditti, and the long knife which each carried did not lessen their capacity for taking, at a minute's notice, their parts in the chorus of a melodrama. They just glanced at us as we entered, without any sign of curiosity; but I noticed that the rapid talk, accompanied by energetic gesture, immediately dropped off into comparative silence. I instinctively had the uncomfortable feeling of being unwelcome; a sensation to which I am unused under any circumstances, and therefore dislike the more especially when it comes. And the impression was emphasised when the tavern-keeper, or waiter, whichever he was, suggested, with extreme politeness, that he had carried the refreshment of two guests so distinguished into the *szoba*, or inner parlour, as being the pleasanter. As it happened, it was neither pleasanter, nor otherwise; except in so far as I no longer felt myself to be intruding where one was not wanted. And, no sooner had we seated ourselves there, than the buzz of voices began again.

"Surely that isn't Magyar they're talking, Phil?" I asked, not having been able, though with a good ear for languages, to catch a word.

"Not a bit of it," said Phil, looking puzzled. I thought I knew every lingo of these parts, laste-

wise by sight ; but that might be the language of the Fairies, for me. And my belief is they're none of the best of company, unless 'tis to their own selves."

"What makes you think that? Who do you think they are?"

"I wouldn't wonder if they were horse-stalers. Not that there's much harm in lifting a horse, of course ; when I was serving the Empress, we used to call it duty. But it isn't as if they stuck to the horse. They'll take the saddle as well ; and if there's a pair of legs across the saddle, I wouldn't like to be the man that owned 'em."

"Then do such men have a language of their own? But hark——"

No wonder I started. For another voice was speaking the self-same unknown tongue ; and if the tongue were that of horse-stealers, the voice was that of András Mári.

Of course I could have confirmed the evidence of my ears by that of my eyes, by shifting my seat so as to see through the half-open door ; and I suppose that most people would have held me justified. But I could not bring myself to do so. It seemed to me—stupidly enough, perhaps—that it would be an act of treachery to one who had given me no confidence, and had a right to have her reserve respected. No—probably it was not she, in spite of a voice that I should have known out of a million ; and if it were, I had no right to embarrass her by finding her in company where she might not choose to be found. But I was not to escape from the proof. Phil Dwyer caught my

eye, and pointed to the further end of the room, opposite to the door. Following the direction of his hand, I saw a mirror ; and in that mirror I saw András Mári reflected as plainly as I had heard her speaking in that unknown tongue.

It was she, though her dress had been changed for that of a peasant-woman—cleaner and fresher, perhaps, than was usual, but not otherwise distinctive. She was speaking gravely and quietly, and I could see that the rough men about her treated her with all the deference due to a lady. I was glad that my burning curiosity to know what she was saying could not be gratified ; I was angrily glad that my determination not to see her had been disappointed. As for Phil, he smiled and said nothing. But I thought there was a sort of “ I told you so ” touch in his smile, that annoyed me more than I can say.

Well, what was it to me, after all ? There was nothing for me but to go home, wait for her visit, and never let her suspect that I had seen her here. We should part in due time, and nothing that concerned either of us really concerned the other. She did not remain long in the tavern ; and, having given her sufficient law, we also left, and returned home. And somehow it seemed less like home when I returned.

Something must surely have happened ; she did not come all that day, and I was finding Phil worse than no company. At last, however—it was towards evening—a tap came to my door. I opened, and a sealed note was put into my hand by a messenger—a girl—who instantly took herself off without a word.

What was it going to say ? No—I was not in love with my mystery, I maintain it ; but my fingers trembled as I broke the seal. There were not many words :—

“ I told you that I should some day demand my fee. The day has come, sooner than I looked for. ‘ To help you, if ever you want me ’—those were your own words yesterday, on which you offered me your hand. If your words meant nothing, do not come. I shall think none the worse of you. But, if they meant what words should mean, you are strong enough to travel now : get a horse, and take the straightest road to Lugos. There are reasons why I can say no more.—A. M.”

Of course there was but one thing for a man with the smallest remnant of a head on his shoulders to do ; and, of course, that was just the one thing which could not be done. She had not spared herself in my service ; for aught I could tell, it was on my account that she was in peril ; and that she might well be in some most complicated peril followed from what I had seen a few hours ago, and had been so utterly unable to read. To have been prudent would have been brutal.

“ Phil,” said I, “ you know this place. Buy me the best horse you can find in an hour—a horse for the road. I have had a message that obliges me to leave at once, ill or well.”

“ And a good job too,” said Phil. “ ‘Tis time ! And, faith, I’ll go as well.”

“ You ? ”

“ To be sure. If there’s any master that wants a man, ’tis yourself ; and if there’s any man that

wants a master, 'tis me. 'Tis but two days ago there was a trifling difference between me and the gentleman I sweep for ; he chanced to run his nose against one of my knuckles, and though I forgave him, he's just as bad for bearing malice as the doctor. 'Tis wonderful how tender skins are out of Kerry. So he's out of temper, and I'm out of place : and I'd like to be for a bit where I can talk with the tongue my mother gave me."

"But you don't even know where I'm going——"

"Sure, that's your honour's affair. 'Tis none of mine. A man must be somewhere ; and one place is no better than another, out of Tralee."

It might certainly be of use to have a comrade of so accommodating a disposition, who would be, more or less, at one's orders : and she had said nothing about its being needful for me to go alone.

"Well then," said I, "buy a couple of horses, and what you need. We'll go on together till I give you occasion to knock *me* down——"

"Divvle a fear of that, sir," said he, with a grin. "I'm the laste unpaceable boy alive ; and if the haythens here will be running up against me fist, 'tis their own business : 'tis none of mine."

CHAPTER VII.

IN a few days we were in the heart of the mountainous country which lies between Buros, in Hungary, and the River Muros, where it enters Transylvania. It was slow and difficult travelling,

even for persons so well mounted as we were ; for I must own that Mr. Dwyer had proved himself a match for even a Magyar horsedealer. But it was travelling of a kind peculiarly congenial to anybody with the faintest taste for adventure. To me, pre-occupied as my mind was, it was altogether delightful. There were no inns ; we lodged now at some lone cattle station, now at some well-to-do farmer's, now at some village pastor's ; sometimes our chamber was the kitchen ; sometimes the stable. We were nearly always used hospitably ; and, whether we were or not, Mr. Dwyer was always equal to the occasion, and had a way of making himself understood by the women everywhere, old and young, which convinced me that his travels had included the Groves of Blarney. And then the days of solitary riding over vast grassy plains, bounded only by the horizon to the north, and to the south by the sparkling summits of the purple Carpathians. What with the air and the freedom, if anything of evil had entered into my blood, it was gone. Then, when we left the plains and entered among the hills, the deep gorges or the precipitous shelves along which the rough road led us intensified the sense of romantic adventure which reigned over the whole.

And surely it was a real adventure—one which might have been undertaken by a Knight of the Round Table and his squire. Or, if by a Quixote rather than by a Lancelot, that made no difference to the excitement of my piece of knight-errantry, sent on an unknown adventure by a distressed damsel of mystery. Whoever she was, I had

already done battle for her ; and she had waited upon me as a lady upon a knight who lies wounded in an enchanted tower. What was I summoned for ? What was to happen ? The very vagueness was of itself a romance ; as a good knight, all I had to do as yet was to live for the day, and to have faith in my good fortune.

I had not yet met so much as a single dragon. But none the less my spirits rose almost hour by hour ; more indeed than was quite becoming in one whose lady might, for aught I could tell, be pining in chains in the depth of some giant's dungeon. Whatever end my journey was to have, I should be sorry when it came ; for the present hour was very good indeed. Yes—Life was, indeed, the best thing worth having of all things in the world ; Life for its own sake—Life, just for the sake of living.

It was on the sixth day of our journey that we felt ourselves reaching the heart of the mountains, indeed. Our last halting-place had been our strangest ; a village of gold-washers ; that is to say, of a race who have formed a sort of hereditary caste from time immemorial, and spend their lives in searching the soil and refuse carried down by the mountain streams for particles of gold. They were a swarthier people than even the sun-blackened peasants, and spoke a language among themselves exceedingly like what Phil Dwyer had taken for the jargon of horse-thieves ; and I must own that we were both a little relieved when we found our own steeds the next morning safe and sound. For the rest, we had been entertained as

well as the little nest of huts, or rather wigwams, allowed. The people had not gone out of their way to serve us ; but they had withheld nothing.

Naturally we had plenty to talk about ; and I liked Phil Dwyer better the more I knew of him. He was so delightfully hopeless a vagabond ; he had such supreme faith in his own wisdom, and such an absolute incapacity for turning it to any personal account whatever. And then he was so utterly good-tempered and content that it almost tried my patience now and then.

"Do you really mean to tell me, Phil," I asked him, as we entered a singularly dark and narrow ravine, where the road had been formed rather by the gold-bearing torrent than by pickaxes and spades, "that you have no curiosity as to where I am taking you ? If anybody was going to lead me into a black gorge like that, I should want to know, at any rate, that it had another end."

"It does look an ugly bit," said Phil, looking up the dark and slippery sides, on which patches of snow still lingered, and then watching the flight of an eagle from the crag on which it had been perching. "And I'll own to liking better to go in at either end with the pistols than without 'em. 'Tis a fine bit this, for a man who wants a good horse to get one for nothing."

"Then you don't really care a straw where we're going ?"

"Divvle a rag, your honour, so long as we get there."

"And suppose I don't know any more than you ?"

"Why then, if 'tis to Nowhere we're going, we'll get there all the sooner, and we can't take the wrong road."

"Anyhow, we can't take a worse one than this," I was saying, for leaving the torrent, it took a sharp downward bend to the left—a declivity so steep and sudden that it was all we could do to keep our horses from reaching the bottom by rolling. It was really part of the basin of a cataract; and, when we reached the end of the slippery descent, we could only wonder how travellers fared who, coming in the other direction, had to scramble up instead of sliding down.

"Halt, there!"

Among the echoing rocks, and mixed with the rush of the water, the hoarse shout sounded like a roar. I was riding in front, and instinctively grasped my pistol as I looked forward through such daylight as there can be where the sun never comes. Great Heaven! Stationed on a projecting rock, and covering me with a long musket barrel, was my old enemy, the huge gypsy who had stabbed me while I was trying to save the purse of András Mári. Yes; and I could tell that he knew me as well as I knew him.

"Look out!" cried Phil, and at the same moment two half-naked fellows, all wet with the cataract, sprang from among the rocks like panthers, and had seized my horse's head, forcing it back savagely.

There was neither time nor need to think what was happening.

"Fire!" I called out to Phil, discharging my

own horse-pistol full in the face of the man who was covering me. But my treacherous weapon gave neither flash nor sound, and Phil's was as false as mine. So this had been the hospitality of the gold-washers. . . . I could only use the butt upon the heads and hands of my immediate assailants, trusting that if the brigand in front of me fired his aim might be balked by the scuffle. The trap was too narrow for Phil to come beside me ; my one chance was to beat off these two, and make a rush forward, so that Phil might have room to follow. But a fox might as well have hoped to rush through a pack of hounds. I found myself in the midst of a score of savage forms ; and, quicker than I can think of it, I was torn from my horse, blinded with a bandage, pinioned, and carried off.

I can no more describe the ambushade now than I could escape from it then. If I have made a single detail clear, I have given a wrong impression. After I had endeavoured to discharge my useless pistol, it had been all wild rush, followed by darkness and bound limbs, and finally by silence, and what seemed like solitude, and limbs bruised and aching as well as bound. It was my plight itself that was clear enough, and which gave me other things to think of than the details of my capture. No doubt the gold-washers, or some of them, were in league with the brigands, had given them the intelligence of well-mounted travellers presumably worth attention, and had seen to it that our weapons should be out of working order. As to the fact that my old enemy was among the band, that was

a coincidence too natural to be worth attention. It might seem undignified on the part of a mounted brigand to lift a lady's purse ; but I doubt if, outside romance, the freebooter has much sense of professional dignity. As to the outcome, of course, the usual course is to hold the captive to ransom ; and that was an unpleasant reflection. For I had no friends whose whereabouts I knew nearer than Frankfort-on-the-Main ; it might take months before negotiations could be even opened ; and, though I was well enough off for ordinary needs, I was by no means prepared to diminish my capital in order to satisfy the rapacity of Transylvanian brigands. It seemed a black look out, any way. And the worst reflection of all was that perhaps my delay might prove fatal to András Mári, supposing her to be in some extremity—that, at the best, I should seem to her false to my word, and guilty of the blackest and most cowardly ingratitude.

" Phil—are you there ? " I asked at a venture. But no answer came. I could not reach out my hand to help me find out in what sort of prison I might be ; for my arms were fastened to my sides, and so tightly that my flesh was almost cut by the rough rope that pinioned them. Only a cold dampness seemed to tell me that I was not in the open air.

At last—after an hour, perhaps, since it seemed like three or four—I heard a sound of scrambling and of falling pebbles, and a hand rather rougher than the rope tore the bandage from my eyes. Then I found, thanks to the dim light, that I was in a small cavern, apparently in the face of a cliff,

for there rose like a veil before the entrance the fine spray of some torrent too far below to send up more than the faintest murmur. Who had removed the bandage I know not ; but, standing sentry-wise at the entrance of the cave, was my enemy himself, still armed with his long piece, and regarding me with an Oriental mingling of fierceness and serenity—nobody who knows the East will charge me with self-contradiction.

I had no fear of murder, even though I was alone with an assassin who, I felt sure, would have the greatest possible pleasure in sending a bullet through me then and there. Were my immediate murder intended, it would have been over ; and I knew enough, by hearsay, of the manners and customs of banditti everywhere to be aware that it would cost my gaoler his own life if he allowed a private quarrel to deprive his company of their ransom. Should I treat him as an acquaintance, or should I ignore our former meeting ? On the whole, I concluded, for prudence sake, to let bygones be bygones, after the manner of Mr. Dwyer when he had knocked somebody down—though in this case things were the other way round.

“What has become of my comrade ?” I asked.

“Ask Shitan, dog of a Saxon !” was all his answer—and an odd one, seeing that I was supposed to be in a Christian land.

“Am I not to see your chief ?” I asked again, with as much good temper as the circumstances allowed.

“I told you to question Shitan—not me, he growled.

"I beg your pardon. I did not see the difference," I could not help saying. But my feeble sarcasm failed to provoke a retort out of which I might have gathered something. I had to put up with the poor consolation of having had the last word, such as it was; and it was so far a comfort to one who had no other defence or offence, that I have never since misunderstood the luxury it must be to a woman when she finds herself over-matched, or grudged it to her.

Towards dusk, my sentry was relieved by two or three less formidable guards, of whom one, at least, seemed disposed to be good-natured. He loosened my cords in so deft a manner that, while I was rendered a great deal more comfortable, I was fettered even more securely. I think he must have had a genius for tying knots, and had more desire to display his own cleverness than to give me ease. He also brought me half a gourd filled with delightfully cold and pure water, and a huge piece of bread as black as a coal, with two or three onions. My guards chattered freely among themselves; but I did not understand a word, nor, when I spoke, did they evidently understand a word of mine. Presently they fell to playing some game with cards, diversified with an occasional wrangle. And so in its monotony, broken by occasional reliefs of guard, the night dragged through, until I fell asleep out of sheer exhaustion.

So soundly did I sleep at last that it required a severe shaking to rouse me—at any rate, whether it was needed or not, the shaking was severe—and it must have taken me a full half minute to realise

where I was, or what had befallen me. But when I did—oh, how stiff I was, and how I ached; I was all one huge ache, where I was not numbed.

“Drink this!” said a half-naked fellow, whom I had not yet seen—there seemed no end to the band. And he emphasized his command by presenting a pistol at my head with one hand while he held out to me a silver cup with the other.

“Certainly,” I said, thinking of Fair Rosamond. I drank, and—strange!—with a well-remembered aromatic flavour there came back to me the luxurious glow, through limbs and veins and brain, which seemed to have brought me back from the grave once before. Aching and numbness left me as if by magic; and, when my cords were still further loosened, and I rose upright, I was more refreshed than if I had passed the night on down.

I was conducted, unblinded, by three armed brigands, round a corner of the cave, by a ledge so narrow and slippery that it seemed scarce possible to avoid falling into the torrent far below, and then through a thick copse, by various rough paths, until we emerged into a good-sized hollow among the grey rocks which arose on all sides—some sheer, some broken. It was a strange scene, indeed, into the midst of which I thus entered. The hollow was half-filled with men of all shades of colour, in all attitudes, in all grades of costume, from that of fully clad hunter or herdsman to that of the nearly naked savage, and all more or less fully armed. And, standing nearly in the midst, beside a long, low fragment of rock, I saw—not as a captive, but as a Queen—András Mări.

CHAPTER VIII.

I WAS brought face to face with her—she on one side of the slab of rock, I on the other. Not knowing what could possibly be about to happen, I could only look steadily and gravely into her eyes, which, I thought, were not at ease in meeting mine.

At last she spoke, but in a low voice ; and I noticed that, despite the deep brown of her skin, she was deadly pale.

“ Do you know me—now ? ”

“ No more than ever,” I answered. “ I am here at your bidding——”

“ Do you remember Erdélyi Sándor ? ”

“ What ! ” I exclaimed. “ You mean the brigand who——”

“ Enough. I see you remember. Cannot you tell who I am—*Now* ? ”

“ Great Heaven, no ! ”

“ Great Heaven, rather, that any man—even you—should not know the woman whom alone I *can* be ! You, so wise in talk about gratitude and vengeance—you need to be told that the whole world is wide enough for you to hide in, while Flamenka is alive ? ”

“ Flamenka—*you* ? ”

“ I. We once had a long talk together, you and I ; we will finish it now, once for all.” She had grown so pale that I thought she was about to

faint ; but she brought herself to with a visible effort, and proceeded, in a cold and passionless monotone, in which, however, it was just possible to trace a faint vibration. "When—he—was taken, I swore upon the Cross, and the Koran, upon Fire and Water, that I would exact life for life ; that whoever took the life of Sándor should give me his life, and that in whatever manner Sándor died, so should his murderer also die—and by my own hand. Had you been a soldier, I would have fought you hand to hand. Being what you are—you will seat yourself in the hollow of that great stone and I shall take your head with my sword, even as his head was taken by yours."

"But what have I"—I was beginning—

"No. It is useless for you to speak of mercy or ransom. Ah, it was terrible when I thought that death was going to save you from vengeance. But fortune was not so cruel. I wrestled with death for you, and I prevailed——"

"You mean," I could only ask, as calmly as bewilderment allowed me, "that you saved my life only in order that you might take it in your own way ? But even so, what have I to do with Erdélyi Sándor ? With one who is no more than a name to me ?"

"You look me in the face, and deny that his head did not fall by your sword ?"

"And do you take me for an executioner—me ?"

"You deny it ? Very well ; you shall have a fair trial. Here are your judges," she said, in a stronger voice, pointing out her subjects by a

majestic sweep of the arm, "and hear am I, your accuser, and the witness against you. Men," she said, in a voice that must have been distinctly heard to the utmost verge of the circle, "I went to Koros in order to meet with my enemy, and to bring him into my power. I heard he frequented a certain garden; there I went, and there he was pointed out to me. I dropped a purse, giving Mannocho orders to lift it in his sight, so that he might rescue it, and return it to me. Mannocho went beyond his orders, for which he will be punished when his turn comes. Never, for one moment, was this man out of my sight till he was safe in the charge of one who could excite no suspicion, and who, knowing nothing, could tell him nothing. He nearly died of Mannocho's knife. I strove, I prayed that he might not escape what I had vowed. In his fever, he did nothing but rave of his trade—of necks and swords of justice. You, his judges, is he the man? Yes, or no?"

A sullen murmur rose from the circle.

"They say yes. But I will give you one chance more. Mannocho! You saw Sándor die. . . Is this the man?"

My enemy had come forward.

"That is he," he said, with a flash of the eyes that I could not misread.

"You swear it?"

"I swear that this is the man who beheaded Erdélyi Sándor," he answered.

"You hear," said she. "Oh why, why," she suddenly burst out, "did you not take the liberty I gave you when I left Koros? Why did you

obey the summons which it was madness to obey? Why have you forced me to keep my vow?"

"Because I wished to think myself a gentleman," I said, as coldly as I could. "Because I owed you a debt."

"What! for nothing more than that?" she went on, quickly, and with what seemed like growing rage. "Only to keep a wretched promise to a woman? You did not come, then, because *I* called you? If I had been some hideous old hag, you would have come just the same?"

"I hope so," I answered; and I hope, at least, that my answer was strictly true.

"Then—then it is fate that condemns you," she cried out, with a very passion of scorn. "Not even I can help a — fool. You say that Life is the only thing you—love. Bid it farewell. Seat yourself. My vow has been fate. . . . Mannoeh : my sword."

She was right: Life was very dear. I was clearly the victim of some incomprehensible blunder; but, no less clearly, to resist would be as vain as to argue or to plead. No—never had life seemed so well worth living. But there was still one thing left to be lived for, and that was to bethink me of my English birth, and to die with dignity. Even the gypsy bandit, to whose ghost I was being sacrificed, had done so much. I would have escaped if I could; but, as I had less chance of that than if I had been under the claws of a tigress, I composed myself, and made Flamenka my best bow. I wanted to leave her a last word, but none would come.

Presently," she said to a man who just then came up and said something to her in a low tone," "I cannot attend to them now. . . . Wait, though; it may be well for him to see how *we* do justice. Then we will set him free without a ransom, on condition that he shall tell how Erdélyi Sándor was avenged. Give the new prisoner a good place—a place of honour. . . . And—now!"

I looked around to see who might be my fellow captive; but in vain. A couple of the bandits offered to help me with my toilette, but I made a point of declining, bared my neck, and seated myself as comfortably as I could; I trust I *showed* no fear. But it was a dreadful moment; try to put yourself in my place—do not ask me to put myself into it again. . . . Flamenka came forward, with uplifted sword; I did not see, but felt its gleam. And I heard her draw a hard sigh, almost a groan.

Why did not the sword fall? And yet I am sure it fell, for I felt a sharp wind on my flesh, so cold that, for a moment, I took it for the sharpness of steel. And, oh! what a horrible hush there was all round; and what a blinding mist of crimson filled the air. I was ceasing to breathe before I knew that the sword swung upward again; I was ceasing to care.

"*Isten anyá!*" exclaimed a man's voice. "What a bungle! Madam, it is impossible to strike straight if one shuts one's eyes. And *Angyal's Szentek!* What a way to hold a sword of justice! One would take you for the pupil of a hussar!"

"What means this?" I heard Flamenka through the midst. "Who are *yóu*?"

"You will pardon me, madam, for interrupting you at the critical moment ; it is not etiquette, I am aware. But to one who understands things, it goes to the heart to see them bungled ; and, what is more, I *will* not see them bungled. I have no doubt that the sentence of the Court is thoroughly unjust, but that is not my business. I am an artist, not a critic. Since this gentleman must die, spare him, at least, the cruelty—I may say the disgrace—of being decapitated by an amateur—and a heads-woman ! There is no precedent for such a thing—none. For Heaven's sake, put my ransom at what you will, but do not condemn me to see a man beheaded by a woman—a woman who shuts her eyes ! Permit *me* to act, for his sake and for mine. You shall see how things are done when an artist does them. And, what is more, I have a proper sword—my own ; for I was on my way to perform an operation at Lugos when I was forced to accept the hospitality of this good company."

"You are yourself a headsman ?"

"I have that honour. But—*Isten Anya!* Mein Herr—I knew it ; I read it in the garden at Koros. We *have* met again !"

He was addressing *me*. . . .

"You are yourself a headsman ?" repeated András Mári ; no—Flamenka I have to call her now. András Mári was no more.

"A headsman ? *Szentek's Angyal!* I am the Headsman of Koros ; I am Vitéz Boldisár !" he answered, with all an artist's pride.

A sob seemed to tear Flamenka's bosom ; but

the cry that came with it was surely one of gladness. My brain was still swimming, but the mist before my eyes was melting, so that I could see.

"It has been written!" cried Flamenka, exultingly. "The stars have delivered you into my hands—it is no longer my will, but theirs. I have mistaken—thank Heaven!—but not they! Vitéz Boldisár, murderer of Erdélyi, prepare to die, like him!"

I turned sick, as I saw him turn pale. "I see," he said at last. "This is not a case, then, of ransom?"

"Not all the treasure of the Empire," said she, "would outweigh my vow."

"This is horrible!" I could not help crying out. "Mári—Flamenka—whoever you are, woman, or witch, or fiend, you see what a mistake vengeance has already led you into: beware that this is not a worse one still! My life you had made yours, by having given it me back—in a way: but this man's is not yours. He was doing his duty when—will his death bring your husband to life? The stars, indeed! Are they slaves to our mad passions? Woman—I have been talking face to face with Death. But a moment ago I saw the colour of his mantle, and felt his breath upon me. I have been nearer to the stars than you, with all your magic, ever were. And, in their name, I command you, yes, command you, to let this man go."

Heaven knows what made me burst out in such a fashion as that, or whence came my words; or how long it was before she answered me. But it was a long time. It was so long as to almost make me hope that my will, after all, was stronger than hers.

"No," she said, at last. "If I am false and faithless to Sándor in heart, it is not *you* who must turn me—you, least of all! So——"

"Don't trouble yourself, Mein Herr," said Vitéz. "It is very kind of you; but I see most things: and I see that the lady feels bound to pay her debt in full to her first lover before her conscience will allow her to take a second. Well, consciences are queer things; and so are women; and so, for that matter, are men. It's a pity that I should be the debt which has to be paid; but one must die some time; and I assure you there is no better way of dying than on the scaffold—none. I almost envied Endélyi Sándor, to be operated upon so skilfully. Skilfully—ah, that's what hurts me: that I, *I* should be a *corpus vile*, for a blundering woman to try her hand on. Madam, do not put the ablest headsman in Hungary to the shame of assisting at a bungle. It made me creep to see the clumsy style in which you were about to operate upon this gentleman. Fortunately, you will now have a proper sword: and I assure you that more depends upon the weapon than you may be aware. . . . Allow me. Let me arrange it for you. There—keep your fingers upon the hilt precisely like that. Bah! Don't clutch it in that stupid way: the sword of justice isn't a carving-knife, madam. Probably, as a novice, you won't do much execution at the first stroke. I should like to put you through a course of cabbage-heads for half-an-hour. No? Then, with your sword poised so, fix your eyes hard upon the exact spot where you will strike, and never move them. That's the worst

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.

CHAPTER IX.

THERE was a sudden commotion at the edge of the crowd ; the dead silence was broken by shouts and cries. For a moment I thought that even these brigands were mutinying against a scene which resembled some savage heathen sacrifice, and which the behaviour of the victim rendered yet more ghastly. He—and I am positive it was not bravado—had crossed one leg over the other, and, having taken out a book, was quietly reading it, while waiting for the blow. But Flamenka and I looked forth across the hollow. And then more loudly and more fiercely rose the shouts into yells of rage and terror, as a troop of Hussars rode on at a quick trot through the broken circle, using their sabres as they came.

It was a surprise ; and it was smartly done. The brigands, thrown into a panic by the onset, fled in every direction ; and, as the ground cleared, my heart leaped to recognise my friend Phil in front of the Hussars. He must have escaped, then, from the ambush ; he must have fallen upon help and rescue by one of those chances which are always befriending those who make a point of throwing chances away.

"They're safe, the horses—both of 'em," he shouted at me as soon as he came within hail. A bullet whistled past my ear ; and the last I saw of Mannocho was his disappearance into the copse

towards the cave. The headsman rose from his seat, pocketed his book, and wiped his brow.

Only Flamenka did not move.

"The stars refuse faithless vows," she said, looking at me as if with her whole soul. "I—*hate*—you—you who have made my heart false to Sándor! You, who have robbed him of all that was left him—Love and Revenge! I go where I can be false no more."

Something flashed in her hand.

One last shot ; and neither Life nor Death concerned Flamenka any more.

THE END.

Extract from Mr. Sidney Dickinson's letter to the *Boston Journal*, descriptive of a trip over the Canadian Pacific Railway from Vancouver, B.C., to Montreal.

The impression that is made upon the traveller by a journey over this road is, at first, one of stupefaction, of confusion, out of which emerge slowly the most evident details. If one can find any fault with the trip, it must be upon the score of its excess of wonders. There is enough of scenery and grandeur along the line of the Canadian Pacific to make a dozen roads remarkable; after it is seen, the experiences of other journeys are quite forgotten. The road is attracting large numbers of tourists, and will attract more as its fame becomes more widely known; it is, undoubtedly, the most remarkable of all the products of this present age of iron. I have crossed the continent three times and should have some criterion for the judgment, and may say that whether we look to Ontario and Manitoba for richness of soil and peaceful and prosperous homes of men; to Lake Superior for ruggedness of shore, beauty of expanse of water, or wealth of mine and quarry; to Assiniboia and Alberta for impressive stretch of prairie and wild life of man, bird and beast, or to the Rocky, Selkirk and Cascade Mountains for sublimity and awfulness of precipice, peak and crag—we shall find them all as they nowhere else exist, even in America, the land of all lands for natural resources and wonders. No more delightful trip can be imagined than that by the Canadian Pacific Railway during the months of summer. For ourselves, until near Montreal, we found neither heat nor dust, and arrived at our journey's end with little feeling of fatigue. One point is especially worthy of remark—indeed, two, but one above all the rest. That is, the superior methods of provisioning the line, a thing in marked contrast to some roads which I could mention, where travellers are sure to be fed irregularly and wretchedly at the eating houses by the way, and, in consequence of delays, often are unable to secure any provision at all for eight or ten hours. The Canadian Pacific runs dining cars over all its line, except through the mountains, and there well managed hotels furnish a most excellent meal and at a moderate cost. In the dining cars (which are put on in relays at certain fixed points) meals are served exactly on time from day to day, and even in the wildest regions the passenger may be sure of dining, supping or breakfasting as well and cheaply as at any first-class hotel. The second point upon which comment is permissible is the invariable courtesy of all the railway's servants; I myself am much indebted to engineers, conductors and division officials for facilities in seeing and learning about the country over which we travelled. Wonderful in its construction, the road is equally admirable for the spirit and carefulness with which it is run.

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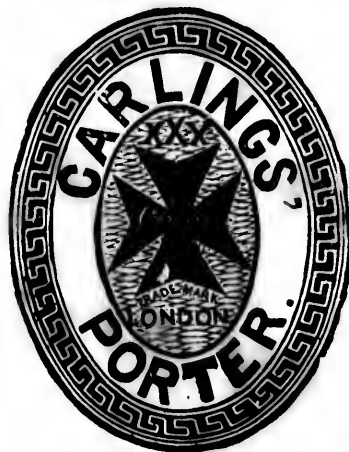
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