

# **Bourgonef**

Anonymous

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### I. AT A TABLE D'HOTE

At the close of February, 1848, I was in Nuremberg. My original intention had been to pass a couple of days there on my way to Munich, that being, I thought, as much time as could reasonably be spared for so small a city, beckoned as my footsteps were to the Bavarian Athens, of whose glories of ancient art and German Renaissance I had formed expectations the most exaggerated— expectations fatal to any perfect enjoyment, and certain to be disappointed, however great the actual merit of Munich might be. But after two days at Nuremberg I was so deeply interested in its antique sequestered life, the charms of which had not been deadened by previous anticipations, that I resolved to remain there until I had mastered every detail and knew the place by heart.

I have a story to tell which will move amidst tragic circumstances of too engrossing a nature to be disturbed by archaeological interests, and shall not, therefore, minutely describe here what I observed in Nuremberg, although no adequate description of that wonderful city has yet fallen in my way. To readers unacquainted with this antique place, it will be enough to say that in it the old German life seems still to a great extent rescued from the all-devouring, all-equalizing tendencies of European civilization. The houses are either of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, or are constructed after those ancient models. The citizens have preserved much of the simple manners and customs of their ancestors. The hurrying feet of commerce and curiosity pass rapidly by, leaving it sequestered from the agitations and the turmoils of metropolitan existence. It is as quiet as a village. During my stay there rose in its quiet streets the startled echoes of horror at a crime unparalleled in its annals, which, gathering increased horror from the very peacefulness and serenity of the scene, arrested the attention and the sympathy in a degree seldom experienced. Before narrating that, it will be necessary to go back a little, that my own connection with it may be intelligible, especially in the fanciful weaving together of remote conjectures which strangely involved me in the story.

The table d'hote at the Bayerischer Hof had about thirty visitors— all, with one exception, of that local commonplace which escapes remark. Indeed this may almost always be said of tables d'hote; though there is a current belief, which I cannot share, of a table d'hote being very delightful—of one being certain to meet pleasant people there." It may be so. For many years I believed it was so. The general verdict received my assent. I had never met those delightful people, but was always expecting to meet them. Hitherto they had been conspicuous by

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their absence. According to my experience in Spain, France, and Germany, such dinners had been dreary or noisy and vapid. If the guests were English, they were chillingly silent, or surlily monosyllabic: to their neighbors they were frigid; amongst each other they spoke in low undertones. And if the guests were foreigners, they were noisy, clattering, and chattering, foolish for the most part, and vivaciously commonplace. I don't know which made me feel most dreary. The predominance of my countrymen gave the dinner the gayety of a funeral; the predominance of the Mossoo gave it the fatigue of got-up enthusiasm, of trivial expansiveness. To hear strangers imparting the scraps of erudition and connoisseurship which they had that morning gathered from their valets de place and guide-books, or describing the sights they had just seen, to you, who either saw them yesterday, or would see them to-morrow, could not be permanently attractive. My mind refuses to pasture on such food with gusto. I cannot be made to care what the Herr Baron's sentiments about Albert Durer or Lucas Cranach may be. I can digest my rindfleisch without the aid of the commis voyageur's criticisms on Gothic architecture. This may be my misfortune. In spite of the Italian blood which I inherit, I am a shy man—shy as the purest Briton. But, like other shy men, I make up in obstinacy what may be deficient in expansiveness. I can be frightened into silence, but I won't be dictated to. You might as well attempt the persuasive effect of your eloquence upon a snail who has withdrawn into his shell at your approach, and will not emerge till his confidence is restored. To be told that I **MUST** see this, and ought to go there, because my casual neighbor was charme, has never presented itself to me as an adequate motive.

From this you readily gather that I am severely taciturn at a table d'hote. I refrain from joining in the "delightful conversation" which flies across the table, and know that my reticence is attributed to "insular pride." It is really and truly nothing but impatience of commonplace. I thoroughly enjoy good talk; but, ask yourself, what are the probabilities of hearing that rare thing in the casual assemblage of forty or fifty people, not brought together by any natural affinities or interests, but thrown together by the accident of being in the same district, and in the same hotel? They are not "forty feeding like one," but like forty. They have no community, except the community of commonplace. No, tables d'hote are not delightful, and do not gather interesting people together.

Such has been my extensive experience. But this at Nuremberg is a conspicuous exception. At that table there was one guest who, on various grounds, personal and incidental, remains the most memorable man I ever met. From the first he riveted my attention in an unusual degree. He had not, as yet, induced me to emerge from my habitual reserve, for in truth, although he riveted my attention, he inspired me with a strange feeling of repulsion. I could scarcely keep my eyes from him; yet, except the formal bow on sitting down and rising from the table, I had interchanged no sign of fellowship with him. He was a young Russian, named Bourgonef, as I at once learned; rather handsome, and peculiarly arresting to the eye, partly from an air of settled melancholy, especially in his smile, the amiability of which seemed breaking from under clouds of grief, and still more so from the mute appeal to sympathy in the empty sleeve of his right arm, which was looped to the breast-button of his coat. His eyes were large and soft. He had no beard or whisker, and only delicate moustaches. The sorrow, quiet but profound, the amiable smile and the lost arm, were appealing details which at once arrested attention and excited sympathy. But to me this sympathy was mingled with a vague repulsion, occasioned by a certain falseness in the amiable smile, and a furtiveness in the eyes, which I saw—or fancied—and which, with an inexplicable reserve, forming as it were the impregnable citadel in the center of his outwardly polite and engaging manner, gave me something of that vague impression which we express by the words "instinctive antipathy."

It was, when calmly considered, eminently absurd. To see one so young, and by his conversation so highly cultured and intelligent, condemned to early helplessness, his food cut up for him by a servant, as if he were a child, naturally engaged pity, and, on the first day, I cudgeled my brains during the greater part of dinner in the effort to account for his lost arm. He was obviously not a military man; the unmistakable look and stoop of a student told that plainly enough. Nor was the loss one dating from early life: he used his left arm too awkwardly for the event not to have had a recent date. Had it anything to do with his melancholy? Here was a topic for my vagabond imagination, and endless were the romances woven by it during my silent dinner. For the reader must be told of one peculiarity in me, because to it much of the strange complications of my story are due; complications into which a mind less active in weaving imaginary hypotheses to interpret casual and trifling facts

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would never have been drawn. From my childhood I have been the victim of my constructive imagination, which has led me into many mistakes and some scrapes; because, instead of contenting myself with plain, obvious evidence, I have allowed myself to frame hypothetical interpretations, which, to acts simple in themselves, and explicable on ordinary motives, render the simple-seeming acts portentous. With bitter pangs of self-reproach I have at times discovered that a long and plausible history constructed by me, relating to personal friends, has crumpled into a ruin of absurdity, by the disclosure of the primary misconception on which the whole history was based. I have gone, let us say, on the supposition that two people were secretly lovers; on this supposition my imagination has constructed a whole scheme to explain certain acts, and one fine day I have discovered indubitably that the supposed lovers were not lovers, but confidants of their passions in other directions, and, of course, all my conjectures have been utterly false. The secret flush of shame at failure has not, however, prevented my falling into similar mistakes immediately after.

When, therefore, I hereafter speak of my "constructive imagination," the reader will know to what I am alluding. It was already busy with Bourgonef. To it must be added that vague repulsion, previously mentioned. This feeling abated on the second day; but, although lessened, it remained powerful enough to prevent my speaking to him. Whether it would have continued to abate until it disappeared, as such antipathies often disappear, under the familiarities of prolonged intercourse, without any immediate appeal to my amour propre, I know not; but every reflective mind, conscious of being accessible to antipathies, will remember that one certain method of stifling them is for the object to make some appeal to our interest or our vanity: in the engagement of these more powerful feelings, the antipathy is quickly strangled. At any rate it is so in my case, and was so now.

On the third day, the conversation at table happening to turn, as it often turned, upon St. Sebald's Church, a young Frenchman, who was criticising its architecture with fluent dogmatism, drew Bourgonef into the discussion, and thereby elicited such a display of accurate and extensive knowledge, no less than delicacy of appreciation, that we were all listening spellbound. In the midst of this triumphant exposition the irritated vanity of the Frenchman could do nothing to regain his position but oppose a flat denial to a historical statement made by Bourgonef, backing his denial by the confident assertion that "all the competent authorities" held with him. At this point Bourgonef appealed to me, and in that tone of deference so exquisitely flattering from one we already know to be superior he requested my decision; observing that, from the manner in which he had seen me examine the details of the architecture, he could not be mistaken in his confidence that I was a connoisseur. All eyes were turned upon me. As a shy man, this made me blush; as a vain man, the blush was accompanied with delight. It might easily have happened that such an appeal, acting at once upon shyness and ignorance, would have inflamed my wrath; but the appeal happening to be directed on a point which I had recently investigated and thoroughly mastered, I was flattered at the opportunity of a victorious display.

The pleasure of my triumph diffused itself over my feelings towards him who had been the occasion of it. The Frenchman was silenced; the general verdict of the company was too obviously on our side. From this time the conversation continued between Bourgonef and myself; and he not only succeeded in entirely dissipating my absurd antipathy—which I now saw to have been founded on purely imaginary grounds, for neither the falseness nor the furtiveness could now be detected—but he succeeded in captivating all my sympathy. Long after dinner was over, and the salle empty, we sat smoking our cigars, and discussing politics, literature, and art in that suggestive desultory manner which often gives a charm to casual acquaintances.

It was a stirring epoch, that of February, 1848. The Revolution, at first so hopeful, and soon to manifest itself in failure so disastrous, was hurrying to an outburst. France had been for many months agitated by cries of electoral reform, and by indignation at the corruption and scandals in high places. The Praslin murder, and the dishonor of M. Teste, terminated by suicide, had been interpreted as signs of the coming destruction. The political banquets given in various important cities had been occasions for inflaming the public mind, and to the far-seeing, these banquets were interpreted as the sounds of the tocsin. Louis Philippe had become odious to France, and contemptible to Europe. Guizot and Duchatel, the ministers of that day, although backed by a parliamentary majority on which they blindly relied, were unpopular, and were regarded as infatuated even by their admirers in

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Europe. The Spanish marriages had all but led to a war with England. The Opposition, headed by Thiers and Odillon Barrot, was strengthened by united action with the republican party, headed by Ledru Rollin, Marrast, Flocon, and Louis Blanc.

Bourgonef was an ardent republican. So was I; but my color was of a different shade from his. He belonged to the Reds. My own dominant tendencies being artistic and literary, my dream was of a republic in which intelligence would be the archon or ruler; and, of course, in such a republic, art and literature, as the highest manifestation of mind, would have the supreme direction. Do you smile, reader? I smile now; but it was serious earnest with me then. It is unnecessary to say more on this point. I have said so much to render intelligible the stray link of communion which riveted the charm of my new acquaintance's conversation; there was both agreement enough and difference enough in our views to render our society mutually fascinating.

On retiring to my room that afternoon I could not help laughing at my absurd antipathy against Bourgonef. All his remarks had disclosed a generous, ardent, and refined nature. While my antipathy had specially fastened upon a certain falseness in his smile—a falseness the more poignantly hideous if it were falseness, because hidden amidst the wreaths of amiability—my delight in his conversation had specially justified itself by the truthfulness of his mode of looking at things. He seemed to be sincerity itself. There was, indeed, a certain central reserve; but that might only be an integrity of pride; or it might be connected with painful circumstances in his history, of which the melancholy in his face was the outward sign.

That very evening my constructive imagination was furnished with a detail on which it was soon to be actively set to work. I had been rambling about the old fortifications, and was returning at nightfall through the old archway near Albert Durer's house, when a man passed by me. We looked at each other in that automatic way in which men look when they meet in narrow places, and I felt, so to speak, a start of recognition in the eyes of the man who passed. Nothing else, in features or gestures, betrayed recognition or surprise. But although there was only that, it flashed from his eyes to mine like an electric shock. He passed. I looked back. He continued his way without turning. The face was certainly known to me; but it floated in a mist of confused memories.

I walked on slowly, pestering my memory with fruitless calls upon it, hopelessly trying to recover the place where I could have seen the stranger before. In vain memory traveled over Europe in concert-rooms, theaters, shops, and railway carriages. I could not recall the occasion on which those eyes had previously met mine. That they had met them I had no doubt. I went to bed with the riddle undiscovered.

## II. THE ECHOES OF MURDER

Next morning Nuremberg was agitated with a horror such as can seldom have disturbed its quiet; a young and lovely girl had been murdered. Her corpse was discovered at daybreak under the archway leading to the old fortifications. She had been stabbed to the heart. No other signs of violence were visible; no robbery had been attempted.

In great cities, necessarily great centers of crime, we daily hear of murders; their frequency and remoteness leave us undisturbed. Our sympathies can only be deeply moved either by some scenic peculiarities investing the crime with unusual romance or unusual atrocity, or else by the more immediate appeal of direct neighborly interest. The murder which is read of in the Times as having occurred in Westminster, has seldom any special horror to the inhabitants of Islington or Oxford Street; but to the inhabitants of Westminster, and especially to the inhabitants of the particular street in which it was perpetrated, the crime assumes heart-shaking proportions. Every detail is asked for, and every surmise listened to, with feverish eagerness is repeated and diffused through the crowd with growing interest. The family of the victim; the antecedents of the assassin, if he is known; or the conjectures pointing to the unknown assassin,—are eagerly discussed. All the trivial details of household care or domestic fortunes, all the items of personal gossip, become invested with a solemn and affecting interest. Pity for the victim

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and survivors mingle and alternate with fierce cries for vengeance on the guilty. The whole street becomes one family, commingled by an energetic sympathy, united by one common feeling of compassion and wrath.

In villages, and in cities so small as Nuremberg, the same community of feeling is manifested. The town became as one street. The horror spread like a conflagration, the sympathy surged and swelled like a tide. Everyone felt a personal interest in the event, as if the murder had been committed at his own door. Never shall I forget that wail of passionate pity, and that cry for the vengeance of justice, which rose from all sides of the startled city. Never shall I forget the hurry, the agitation, the feverish restlessness, the universal communicativeness, the volunteered services, the eager suggestion, surging round the house of the unhappy parents. Herr Lehfeltdt, the father of the unhappy girl, was a respected burgher known to almost every one. His mercer's shop was the leading one of the city. A worthy, pious man, somewhat strict, but of irreproachable character; his virtues, no less than those of his wife, and of his only daughter, Lieschen— now, alas; for ever snatched from their yearning eyes—were canvassed everywhere, and served to intensify the general grief. That such a calamity should have fallen on a household so estimable, seemed to add fuel to the people's wrath. Poor Lieschen! her pretty, playful ways—her opening prospects, as the only daughter of parents so well to do and so kind—her youth and abounding life—these were detailed with impassioned fervor by friends, and repeated by strangers who caught the tone of friends, as if they, too, had known and loved her. But amidst the surging uproar of this sea of many voices no one clear voice of direction could be heard; no clue given to the clamorous bloodhounds to run down the assassin.

Cries had been heard in the streets that night at various parts of the town, which, although then interpreted as the quarrels of drunken brawlers, and the conflicts of cats, were now confidently asserted to have proceeded from the unhappy girl in her death— struggle. But none of these cries had been heard in the immediate neighborhood of the archway. All the inhabitants of that part of the town agreed that in their waking hours the streets had been perfectly still. Nor were there any traces visible of a struggle having taken place. Lieschen might have been murdered elsewhere, and her corpse quietly deposited where it was found, as far as any evidence went.

Wild and vague were the conjectures. All were baffled in the attempt to give them a definite direction. The crime was apparently prompted by revenge—certainly not by lust, or desire of money. But she was not known to stand in any one's way. In this utter blank as to the assignable motive, I, perhaps alone among the furious crowd, had a distinct suspicion of the assassin. No sooner had the news reached me, than with the specification of the theater of the crime there at once flashed upon me the intellectual vision of the criminal: the stranger with the dark beard and startled eyes stood confessed before me! I held my breath for a few moments, and then there came a tide of objections rushing over my mind, revealing the inadequacy of the grounds on which rested my suspicions. What were the grounds? I had seen a man in a particular spot, not an unfrequented spot, on the evening of the night when the crime had been committed there; that man had seemed to recognize me, and wished to avoid being recognized. Obviously these grounds were too slender to bear any weight of construction such as I had based on them. Mere presence on the spot could no more inculpate him than it could inculpate me; if I had met him there, equally had he met me there. Nor even if my suspicion were correct that he knew me, and refused to recognize me, could that be any argument tending to criminate him in an affair wholly disconnected with me. Besides, he was walking peaceably, openly, and he looked like a gentleman. All these objections pressed themselves upon me, and kept me silent. But in spite of their force I could not prevent the suspicion from continually arising. Ashamed to mention it, because it may have sounded too absurd, I could not prevent my constructive imagination indulging in its vagaries, and with this secret conviction I resolved to await events, and in case suspicion from other quarters should ever designate the probable assassin, I might then come forward with my bit of corroborative evidence, should the suspected assassin be the stranger of the archway.

By twelve o'clock a new direction was given to rumor. Hitherto the stories, when carefully sifted of all exaggerations of flying conjecture, had settled themselves into something like this: The Lehfeltdts had retired to rest at a quarter before ten, as was their custom. They had seen Lieschen go into her bedroom for the night, and had themselves gone to sleep with unclouded minds. From this peaceful security they were startled early in the morning by the appalling news of the calamity which had fallen on them. Incredulous at first, as well they might

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be, and incapable of believing in a ruin so unexpected and so overwhelming, they imagined some mistake, asserting that Lieschen was in her own room. Into that room they rushed, and there the undisturbed bed, and the open window, but a few feet from the garden, silently and pathetically disclosed the fatal truth. The bereaved parents turned a revealing look upon each other's whitened faces, and then slowly retired from the room, followed in affecting silence by the others. Back into their own room they went. The father knelt beside the bed, and, sobbing, prayed. The mother sat staring with a stupefied stare, her lips faintly moving. In a short while the flood of grief, awakened to a thorough consciousness, burst from their laboring hearts. When the first paroxysms were over they questioned others, and gave incoherent replies to the questions addressed to them. From all which it resulted that Lieschen's absence, though obviously voluntary, was wholly inexplicable to them; and no clew whatever could be given as to the motives of the crime. When these details became known, conjecture naturally interpreted Lieschen's absence at night as an assignation. But with whom? She was not known to have a lover. Her father, on being questioned, passionately affirmed that she had none; she loved no one but her parents, poor child! Her mother, on being questioned, told the same story—adding, however, that about seventeen months before, she had fancied that Lieschen was a little disposed to favor Franz Kerkel, their shopman; but on being spoken to on the subject with some seriousness, and warned of the distance between them, she had laughed heartily at the idea, and since then had treated Franz with so much indifference that only a week ago she had drawn from her mother a reproof on the subject.

"I told her Franz was a good lad, though not good enough for her, and that she ought to treat him kindly. But she said my lecture had given her an alarm, lest Franz should have got the same maggot into his head."

This was the story now passing through the curious crowds in every street. After hearing it I had turned into a tobacconist's in the Adlergrasse, to restock my cigar-case, and found there, as everywhere, a group discussing the one topic of the hour. Herr Fischer, the tobacconist, with a long porcelain pipe pendent from his screwed-up lips, was solemnly listening to the particulars volubly communicated by a stout Bavarian priest; while behind the counter, in a corner, swiftly knitting, sat his wife, her black bead-like eyes also fixed on the orator. Of course I was dragged into the conversation. Instead of attending to commercial interests, they looked upon me as the possible bearer of fresh news. Nor was it without a secret satisfaction that I found I could gratify them in that respect. They had not heard of Franz Kerkel in the matter. No sooner had I told what I had heard than the knitting-needles of the vivacious little woman were at once suspended.

"Ach Je!" she exclaimed, "I see it all. He's the wretch!"

"Who?" we all simultaneously inquired.

"Who? Why, Kerkel, of course. If she changed, and treated him with indifference, it was because she loved him; and he has murdered the poor thing."

"How you run on, wife!" remonstrated Fischer; while the priest shook a dubious head.

"I tell you it is so. I'm positive."

"If she loved him."

"She did, I tell you. Trust a woman for seeing through such things."

"Well, say she did," continued Fischer, "and I won't deny that it may be so; but then that makes against the idea of his having done her any harm."

"Don't tell me," retorted the convinced woman. "She loved him. She went out to meet him in secret, and he murdered her—the villain did. I'm as sure of it as if these eyes had seen him do it."



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The husband winked at us, as much as to say, "You hear these women!" and the priest and I endeavored to reason her out of her illogical position. But she was immovable. Kerkel had murdered her; she knew it; she couldn't tell why, but she knew it. Perhaps he was jealous, who knows? At any rate, he ought to be arrested.

And by twelve o'clock, as I said, a new rumor ran through the crowd, which seemed to confirm the little woman in her rash logic. Kerkel had been arrested, and a waistcoat stained with blood had been found in his room! By half-past twelve the rumor ran that he had confessed the crime. This, however, proved on inquiry to be the hasty anticipation of public indignation. He had been arrested; the waistcoat had been found: so much was authentic; and the suspicions gathered ominously over him.

When first Frau Fischer had started the suggestion it flew like wildfire. Then people suddenly noticed, as very surprising, that Kerkel had not that day made his appearance at the shop. His absence had not been noticed in the tumult of grief and inquiry; but it became suddenly invested with a dreadful significance, now that it was rumored that he had been Lieschen's lover. Of all men he would be the most affected by the tragic news; of all men he would have been the first to tender sympathy and aid to the afflicted parents, and the most clamorous in the search for the undiscovered culprit. Yet, while all Nuremberg was crowding round the house of sorrow, which was also his house of business, he alone remained away. This naturally pointed suspicion at him. When the messengers had gone to seek him, his mother refused them admission, declaring in incoherent phrases, betraying great agitation, that her son was gone distracted with grief and could see no one. On this it was determined to order his arrest. The police went, the house was searched, and the waistcoat found.

The testimony of the girl who lived as servant in Kerkel's house was also criminatory. She deposed that on the night in question she awoke about half-past eleven with a violent toothache; she was certain as to the hour, because she heard the clock afterwards strike twelve. She felt some alarm at hearing voices in the rooms at an hour when her mistress and young master must long ago have gone to bed; but as the voices were seemingly in quiet conversation, her alarm subsided, and she concluded that instead of having gone to bed her mistress was still up. In her pain she heard the door gently open, and then she heard footsteps in the garden. This surprised her very much. She couldn't think what the young master could want going out at that hour. She became terrified without knowing exactly at what. Fear quite drove away the toothache, which had not since returned. After lying there quaking for some time, again she heard footsteps in the garden; the door opened and closed gently; voices were heard; and she at last distinctly heard her mistress say, "Be a man, Franz. Good-night— sleep well;" upon which Franz replied in a tone of great agony, "There's no chance of sleep for me." Then all was silent. Next morning her mistress seemed "very queer." Her young master went out very early, but soon came back again; and there were dreadful scenes going on in his room, as she heard, but she didn't know what it was all about. She heard of the murder from a neighbor, but never thought of its having any particular interest for Mr. Franz, though, of course, he would be very sorry for the Lehfeldts.

The facts testified to by the servant, especially the going out at that late hour, and the "dreadful scenes" of the morning, seemed to bear but one interpretation. Moreover, she identified the waistcoat as the one worn by Franz on the day preceding the fatal night.

### III. THE ACCUSED

Now at last the pent-up wrath found a vent. From the distracting condition of wandering uncertain suspicion, it had been recalled into the glad security of individual hate. Although up to this time Kerkel had borne an exemplary reputation, it was now remembered that he had always been of a morose and violent temper, a hypocrite in religion, a selfish sensualist. Several sagacious critics had long "seen through him"; others had "never liked him"; others had wondered how it was he kept his place so long in Lehfeldt's shop. Poor fellow! his life and actions, like those of every one else when illuminated by a light thrown back upon them, seemed so conspicuously despicable, although when illuminated in their own light they had seemed innocent enough. His

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mother's frantic protestations of her son's innocence—her assertions that Franz loved Lieschen more than his own soul—only served to envelop her in the silent accusation of being an accomplice, or at least of being an accessory after the fact.

I cannot say why it was, but I did not share the universal belief. The logic seemed to me forced; the evidence trivial. On first hearing of Kerkel's arrest, I eagerly questioned my informant respecting his personal appearance; and on hearing that he was fair, with blue eyes and flaxen hair, my conviction of his innocence was fixed. Looking back on these days, I am often amused at this characteristic of my constructive imagination. While rejecting the disjointed logic of the mob, which interpreted his guilt, I was myself deluded by a logic infinitely less rational. Had Kerkel been dark, with dark eyes and beard, I should probably have sworn to his guilt, simply because the idea of that stranger had firmly fixed itself in my mind.

All that afternoon, and all the next day, the busy hum of voices was raised by the one topic of commanding interest. Kerkel had been examined. He at once admitted that a secret betrothal had for some time existed between him and Lieschen. They had been led to take this improper step by fear of her parents, who, had the attachment been discovered, would, it was thought, have separated them for ever. Herr Lehfeldt's sternness, no less than his superior position, seemed an invincible obstacle, and the good mother, although doting upon her only daughter, was led by the very intensity of her affection to form ambitious hopes of her daughter's future. It was barely possible that some turn in events might one day yield an opening for their consent; but meanwhile prudence dictated secrecy, in order to avert the most pressing danger, that of separation.

And so the pretty Lieschen, with feminine instinct of ruse, had affected to treat her lover with indifference; and to compensate him and herself for this restraint, she had been in the habit of escaping from home once or twice a week, and spending a delicious hour or two at night in the company of her lover and his mother. Kerkel and his mother lived in a cottage a little way outside the town. Lehfeldt's shop stood not many yards from the archway. Now, as in Nuremberg no one was abroad after ten o'clock, except a few loungers at the cafes and beer-houses, and these were only to be met inside the town, not outside it, Lieschen ran extremely little risk of being observed in her rapid transit from her father's to her lover's house. Nor, indeed, had she ever met anyone in the course of these visits.

On the fatal night Lieschen was expected at the cottage. Mother and son waited at first hopefully, then anxiously, at last with some vague uneasiness at her non-appearance. It was now a quarter past eleven—nearly an hour later than her usual time. They occasionally went to the door to look for her; then they walked a few yards down the road, as if to catch an earlier glimpse of her advancing steps. But in vain. The half-hour struck. They came back into the cottage, discussing the various probabilities of delay. Three-quarters struck. Perhaps she had been detected; perhaps she was ill; perhaps—but this was his mother's suggestion, and took little hold of him—there had been visitors who had stayed later than usual, and Lieschen, finding the night so advanced, had postponed her visit to the morrow. Franz, who interpreted Lieschen's feelings by his own, was assured that no postponement of a voluntary kind was credible of her. Twelve o'clock struck. Again Franz went out into the road, and walked nearly up to the archway; he returned with heavy sadness and foreboding at his heart, reluctantly admitting that now all hope of seeing her that night was over. That night? Poor sorrowing heart, the night was to be eternal! The anguish of the desolate "never more" was awaiting him.

There is something intensely pathetic in being thus, as it were, spectators of a tragic drama which is being acted on two separate stages at once—the dreadful link of connection, which is unseen to the separate actors, being only too vividly seen by the spectators. It was with some interest that I, who believed in Kerkel's innocence, heard this story; and in imagination followed its unfolding stage. He went to bed, not, as may be expected, to sleep; tossing restlessly in feverish agitation, conjuring up many imaginary terrors—but all of them trifles compared with the dread reality which he was so soon to face. He pictured her weeping—and she was lying dead on the cold pavement of the dark archway. He saw her in agitated eloquence pleading with offended parents—and she was removed for ever from all agitations, with the peace of death upon her young face.

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At an early hour he started, that he might put an end to his suspense. He had not yet reached the archway before the shattering news burst upon him. From that moment he remembered nothing. But his mother described his ghastly agitation, as, throwing himself upon her neck, he told her, through dreadful sobs, the calamity which had fallen. She did her best to comfort him; but he grew wilder and wilder, and rolled upon the ground in the agony of an immeasurable despair. She trembled for his reason and his life. And when the messengers came to seek him, she spoke but the simple truth in saying that he was like one distracted. Yet no sooner had a glimpse of light dawned on him that some vague suspicion rested on him in reference to the murder, than he started up, flung away his agitation, and, with a calmness which was awful, answered every question, and seemed nerved for every trial. From that moment not a sob escaped him until, in the narrative of the night's events, he came to that part which told of the sudden disclosure of his bereavement. And the simple, straightforward manner in which he told this tale, with a face entirely bloodless, and eyes that seemed to have withdrawn all their light inwards, made a great impression on the audience, which was heightened into sympathy when the final sob, breaking through the forced calmness, told of the agony which was eating its fiery way through the heart.

The story was not only plausible in itself, but accurately tallied with what before had seemed like the criminating evidence of the maid; tallied, moreover, precisely as to time, which would hardly have been the case had the story been an invention. As to the waistcoat which had figured so conspicuously in all the rumors, it appeared that suspicion had monstrously exaggerated the facts. Instead of a waistcoat plashed with blood—as popular imagination pictured it—it was a gray waistcoat, with one spot and a slight smear of blood, which admitted of a very simple explanation. Three days before, Franz had cut his left hand in cutting some bread; and to this the maid testified, because she was present when the accident occurred. He had not noticed that his waistcoat was marked by it until the next day, and had forgotten to wash out the stains.

People outside shook skeptical heads at this story of the cut hand. The bloody waistcoat was not to be disposed of in that easy way. It had fixed itself too strongly in their imagination. Indeed, my belief is that even could they have seen the waistcoat, its insignificant marks would have appeared murderous patches to their eyes. I had seen it, and my report was listened to with ill-concealed disbelief, when not with open protestation. And when Kerkel was discharged as free from all suspicion, there was a low growl of disappointed wrath heard from numerous groups.

This may sympathetically be understood by whomsoever remembers the painful uneasiness of the mind under a great stress of excitement with no definite issue. The lust for a vengeance, demanded by the aroused sensibilities of compassion, makes men credulous in their impatience; they easily believe anyone is guilty, because they feel an imperious need for fastening the guilt upon some definite head. Few verdicts of "Not Guilty" are well received, unless another victim is at hand upon whom the verdict of guilty is likely to fall. It was demonstrable to all judicial minds that Kerkel was wholly, pathetically innocent. In a few days this gradually became clear to the majority, but at first it was resisted as an attempt to balk justice; and to the last there were some obstinate doubters, who shook their heads mysteriously, and said, with a certain incisiveness, "Somebody must have done it; I should very much like to know who."

Suspicion once more was drifting aimlessly. None had pointed in any new direction. No mention of anyone whom I could identify with the stranger had yet been made; but, although silent on the subject, I kept firm in my conviction, and I sometimes laughed at the pertinacity with which I scrutinized the face of every man I met, if he happened to have a black beard; and as black beards are excessively common, my curiosity, though never gratified, was never allowed repose.

Meanwhile Lieschen's funeral had been emphatically a public mourning. Nay, so great was the emotion, that it almost deadened the interest which otherwise would have been so powerful, in the news now daily reaching us from Paris. Blood had flowed upon her streets—in consequence of that pistol-shot, which, either by accident or criminal intent, had converted the demonstration before the hotel of the Minister of Foreign Affairs into an insurrection. Paris had risen; barricades were erected. The troops were under arms. This was agitating news.

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Such is the solidarity of all European nations, and so quick are all to vibrate in unison with the vibrations of each, that events like those transacted in Paris necessarily stirred every city, no matter how remote, nor politically how secure. And it says much for the intense interest excited by the Lehfeltdt tragedy that Nuremberg was capable of sustaining that interest even amid the tremendous pressure of the February Revolution. It is true that Nuremberg is at all times somewhat sequestered from the great movements of the day, following slowly in the rear of great waves; it is true, moreover, that some politicians showed remarkable eagerness in canvassing the characters and hopes of Louis Philippe and Guizot; but although such events would at another period have formed the universal interest, the impenetrable mystery hanging over Lieschen's death threw the Revolution into the background of their thoughts. If when a storm is raging over the dreary moorland, a human cry of suffering is heard at the door, at once the thunders and the tumult sink into insignificance, and are not even heard by the ear which is pierced with the feeble human voice: the grandeurs of storm and tempest, the uproar of surging seas, the clamorous wail of sea-birds amid the volleying artillery of heaven, in vain assail the ear that has once caught even the distant cry of a human agony, or serve only as scenical accompaniments to the tragedy which is foreshadowed by that cry. And so it was amid the uproar of 1848. A kingdom was in convulsions; but here, at our door, a young girl had been murdered, and two hearths made desolate. Rumors continued to fly about. The assassin was always about to be discovered; but he remained shrouded in impenetrable darkness. A remark made by Bourgonef struck me much. Our host, Zum Bayerischen Hof, one day announced with great satisfaction that he had himself heard from the syndic that the police were on the traces of the assassin.

"I am sorry to hear it," said Bourgonef.

The guests paused from eating, and looked at him with astonishment.

"It is a proof," he added, "that even the police now give it up as hopeless. I always notice that whenever the police are said to be on the traces the malefactor is never tracked. When they are on his traces they wisely say nothing about it; they allow it to be believed that they are baffled, in order to lull their victim into a dangerous security. When they know themselves to be baffled, there is no danger in quieting the public mind, and saving their own credit, by announcing that they are about to be successful."

## IV. A DISCOVERY

Bourgonef's remark had been but too sagacious. The police were hopelessly baffled. In all such cases possible success depends upon the initial suggestion either of a motive which leads to a suspicion of the person, or of some person which leads to a suspicion of the motive. Once set suspicion on the right track, and evidence is suddenly alight in all quarters. But, unhappily, in the present case there was no assignable motive, no shadow darkening any person.

An episode now came to our knowledge in which Bourgonef manifested an unusual depth of interest. I was led to notice this interest, because it had seemed to me that in the crime itself, and the discussions which arose out of it, he shared but little of the universal excitement. I do not mean that he was indifferent—by no means; but the horror of the crime did not seem to fascinate his imagination as it fascinated ours. He could talk quite as readily of other things, and far more readily of the French affairs. But on the contrary, in this new episode he showed peculiar interest. It appeared that Lehfeltdt, moved, perhaps, partly by a sense of the injustice which had been done to Kerkel in even suspecting him of the crime, and in submitting him to an examination more poignantly affecting to him under such circumstances than a public trial would have been under others; and moved partly by the sense that Lieschen's love had practically drawn Kerkel within the family—for her choice of him as a husband had made him morally, if not legally, a son-in-law; and moved partly by the sense of loneliness which had now settled on their childless home,—Lehfeltdt had in the most pathetic and considerate terms begged Kerkel to take the place of his adopted son, and become joint partner with him in the business. This, however, Kerkel had gently yet firmly declined. He averred that he felt no injury, though great pain had been inflicted on him by the

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examination. He himself in such a case would not have shrunk from demanding that his own brother should be tried, under suspicions of similar urgency. It was simple justice that all who were suspected should be examined; justice also to them that they might for ever clear themselves of doubtful appearances. But for the rest, while he felt his old affectionate respect for his master, he could recognize no claim to be removed from his present position. Had she lived, said the heartbroken youth, he would gladly have consented to accept any fortune which her love might bestow, because he felt that his own love and the devotion of a life might repay it. But there was nothing now that he could give in exchange. For his services he was amply paid; his feelings towards Lieschen's parents must continue what they had ever been. In vain Lehfeldt pleaded, in vain many friends argued. Franz remained respectfully firm in his refusal.

This, as I said, interested Bourgonef immensely. He seemed to enter completely into the minds of the sorrowing, pleading parents, and the sorrowing, denying lover. He appreciated and expounded their motives with a subtlety and delicacy of perception which surprised and delighted me. It showed the refinement of his moral nature. But, at the same time, it rendered his minor degree of interest in the other episodes of the story, those which had a more direct and overpowering appeal to the heart, a greater paradox.

Human nature is troubled in the presence of all mystery which has not by long familiarity lost its power of soliciting attention; and for my own part, I have always been uneasy in the presence of moral problems. Puzzled by the contradictions which I noticed in Bourgonef, I tried to discover whether he had any general repugnance to stories of crimes, or any special repugnance to murders, or, finally, any strange repugnance to this particular case now everywhere discussed. And it is not a little remarkable that during three separate interviews, in the course of which I severally, and as I thought artfully, introduced these topics, making them seem to arise naturally out of the suggestion of our talk, I totally failed to arrive at any distinct conclusion. I was afraid to put the direct question: Do you not share the common feeling of interest in criminal stories? This question would doubtless have elicited a categorical reply; but somehow, the consciousness of an *arriere-pensee* made me shrink from putting such a question.

Reflecting on this indifference on a special point, and on the numerous manifestations I had noticed of his sensibility, I came at last to the conclusion that he must be a man of tender heart, whose delicate sensibilities easily shrank from the horrible under every form; and no more permitted him to dwell unnecessarily upon painful facts, than they permit imaginative minds to dwell on the details of an operation.

I had not long settled this in my mind before an accident suddenly threw a lurid light upon many details noticed previously, and painfully revived that inexplicable repulsion with which I had at first regarded him. A new suspicion filled my mind, or rather, let me say, a distinct shape was impressed upon many fluctuating suspicions. It scarcely admitted of argument, and at times seemed preposterous, nevertheless it persisted. The mind which in broad daylight assents to all that can be alleged against the absurdities of the belief in apparitions, will often acknowledge the dim terrors of darkness and loneliness—terrors at possibilities of supernatural visitations. In like manner, in the clear daylight of reason I could see the absurdity of my suspicion, but the vague stirrings of feeling remained unsilenced. I was haunted by the dim horrors of a possibility.

Thus it arose. We were both going to Munich, and Bourgonef had shortened his contemplated stay at Nuremberg that he might have the pleasure of accompanying me; adding also that he, too, should be glad to reach Munich, not only for its art, but for its greater command of papers and intelligence respecting what was then going on in France. On the night preceding the morning of our departure, I was seated in his room, smoking and discussing as usual, while Ivan, his servant, packed up his things in two large portmanteaus.

Ivan was a serf who spoke no word of any language but his own. Although of a brutal, almost idiotic type, he was loudly eulogized by his master as the model of fidelity and usefulness. Bourgonef treated him with gentleness, though with a certain imperiousness; much as one might treat a savage mastiff which it was necessary to dominate without exasperating. He more than once spoke of Ivan as a living satire on physiognomists and phrenologists;

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and as I am a phrenologist, I listened with some incredulity.

"Look at him," he would say. "Observe the low, retreating brow, the flat face, the surly mouth, the broad base of the head, and the huge bull-like neck. Would not anyone say Ivan was as destructive as a panther, as tenacious as a bull-dog, as brutal as a bull? Yet he is the gentlest of sluggish creatures, and as tender-hearted as a girl! That thick-set muscular frame shrouds a hare's heart. He is so faithful and so attached that I believe for me he would risk his life; but on no account could you get him to place himself in danger on his own account. Part of his love for me is gratitude for having rescued him from the conscription: the dangers incident to a military life had no charm for him!"

Now, although Bourgonef, who was not a phrenologist, might be convinced of the absence of ferocious instincts in Ivan, to me, as a phrenologist, the statement was eminently incredible. All the appearances of his manner were such as to confirm his master's opinion. He was quiet, even tender in his attentions. But the tyrannous influence of ideas and physical impressions cannot be set aside; and no evidence would permanently have kept down my distrust of this man. When women shriek at the sight of a gun, it is in vain that you solemnly assure them that the gun is not loaded. "I don't know," they reply,— "at any rate, I don't like it." I was much in this attitude with regard to Ivan. He might be harmless. I didn't know that; what I did know was—that I didn't like his looks.

On this night he was moving noiselessly about the room, employed in packing. Bourgonef's talk rambled over the old themes; and I thought I had never before met with one of my own age whose society was so perfectly delightful. He was not so conspicuously my superior on all points that I felt the restraints inevitably imposed by superiority; yet he was in many respects sufficiently above me in knowledge and power to make me eager to have his assent to my views where we differed, and to have him enlighten me where I knew myself to be weak.

In the very moment of my most cordial admiration came a shock. Ivan, on passing from one part of the room to the other, caught his foot in the strap of the portmanteau and fell. The small wooden box, something of a glove-box, which he held in his hand at the time, fell on the floor, and falling over, discharged its contents close to Bourgonef's feet. The objects which caught my eyes were several pairs of gloves, a rouge-pot and hare's foot, and a black beard!

By what caprice of imagination was it that the sight of this false beard lying at Bourgonef's feet thrilled me with horror? In one lightning-flash I beheld the archway—the stranger with the startled eyes—this stranger no longer unknown to me, but too fatally recognized as Bourgonef—and at his feet the murdered girl!

Moved by what subtle springs of suggestion I know not, but there before me stood that dreadful vision, seen in a lurid light, but seen as clearly as if the actual presence of the objects were obtruding itself upon my eyes. In the inexpressible horror of this vision my heart seemed clutched with an icy hand.

Fortunately Bourgonef's attention was called away from me. He spoke angrily some short sentence, which of course was in Russian, and therefore unintelligible to me. He then stooped, and picking up the rouge-pot, held it towards me with his melancholy smile. He was very red in the face; but that may have been either anger or the effect of sudden stooping. "I see you are surprised at these masquerading follies," he said in a tone which, though low, was perfectly calm. "You must not suppose that I beautify my sallow cheeks on ordinary occasions."

He then quietly handed the pot to Ivan, who replaced it with the gloves and the beard in the box; and after making an inquiry which sounded like a growl, to which Bourgonef answered negatively, he continued his packing.

Bourgonef resumed his cigar and his argument as if nothing had happened.

The vision had disappeared, but a confused mass of moving figures took its place. My heart throbbed so violently that it seemed to me as if its tumult must be heard by others. Yet my face must have been tolerably calm, since

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Bourgonef made no comment on it.

I answered his remarks in vague fragments, for, in truth, my thoughts were flying from conjecture to conjecture. I remembered that the stranger had a florid complexion; was this rouge? It is true that I fancied the stranger carried a walking-stick in his right hand; if so, this was enough to crush all suspicions of his identity with Bourgonef; but then I was rather hazy on this point, and probably did not observe a walking-stick.

After a while my inattention struck him, and looking at me with some concern, he inquired if there was anything the matter. I pleaded a colic, which I attributed to the imprudence of having indulged in sauerkraut at dinner. He advised me to take a little brandy; but, affecting a fresh access of pain, I bade him good-night. He hoped I should be all right on the morrow—if not, he added, we can postpone our journey till the day after.

Once in my own room I bolted the door, and sat down on the edge of the bed in a tumult of excitement.

## V. FLUCTUATIONS

Alone with my thoughts, and capable of pursuing conjectures and conclusions without external interruption, I quickly exhausted all the hypothetical possibilities of the case, and, from having started with the idea that Bourgonef was the assassin, I came at last to the more sensible conclusion that I was a constructive blockhead. My suspicions were simply outrageous in their defect of evidence, and could never for one moment have seemed otherwise to any imagination less riotously active than mine.

I bathed my heated head, undressed myself, and got into bed, considering what I should say to the police when I went next morning to communicate my suspicions. And it is worthy of remark, as well as somewhat ludicrously self-betraying, that no sooner did I mentally see myself in the presence of the police, and was thus forced to confront my suspicions with some appearance of evidence, than the whole fabric of my vision rattled to the ground. What had I to say to the police? Simply that, on the evening of the night when Lieschen was murdered, I had passed in a public thoroughfare a man whom I could not identify, but who as I could not help fancying, seemed to recognize me. This man, I had persuaded myself, was the murderer; for which persuasion I was unable to adduce a tittle of evidence. It was uncolored by the remotest possibility. It was truly and simply the suggestion of my vagrant fancy, which had mysteriously settled itself into a conviction; and having thus capriciously identified the stranger with Lieschen's murderer, I now, upon evidence quite as preposterous, identified Bourgonef with the stranger.

The folly became apparent even to myself. If Bourgonef had in his possession a rouge-pot and false beard, I could not but acknowledge that he made no attempt to conceal them, nor had he manifested any confusion on their appearance. He had quietly characterized them as masquerading follies. Moreover, I now began to remember distinctly that the stranger did carry a walking-stick in his right hand; and as Bourgonef had lost his right arm, that settled the point.

Into such complications, would the tricks of imagination lead me! I blushed mentally, and resolved to let it serve as a lesson in future. It is needless, however, to say that the lesson was lost, as such lessons always are lost; a strong tendency in any direction soon disregards all the teachings of experience. I am still not the less the victim of my constructive imagination, because I have frequently had to be ashamed of its vagaries.

The next morning I awoke with a lighter breast, rejoicing in the caution which had delayed me from any rash manifestation of suspicions now seen to be absurd. I smiled as the thought arose: what if this suspected stranger should also be pestered by an active imagination, and should entertain similar suspicions of me? He must have seen in my eyes the look of recognition which I saw in his. On hearing of the murder, our meeting may also have recurred to him; and his suspicions would have this color, wanting to mine, that I happen to inherit with my

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Italian blood a somewhat truculent appearance, which has gained for me among my friends the playful sobriquet of "the brigand."

Anxious to atone at once for my folly, and to remove from my mind any misgiving—if it existed—at my quitting him so soon after the disclosures of the masquerading details, I went to Bourgonef as soon as I was dressed and proposed a ramble till the diligence started for Munich. He was sympathetic in his inquiries about my colic, which I assured him had quite passed away, and out we went. The sharp morning air of March made us walk briskly, and gave a pleasant animation to our thoughts. As he discussed the acts of the provisional government, so wise, temperate, and energetic, the fervor and generosity of his sentiments stood out in such striking contrast with the deed I had last night recklessly imputed to him that I felt deeply ashamed, and was nearly carried away by mingled admiration and self-reproach to confess the absurd vagrancy of my thoughts and humbly ask his pardon. But you can understand the reluctance at a confession so insulting to him, so degrading to me. It is at all times difficult to tell a man, face to face, eye to eye, the evil you have thought of him, unless the recklessness of anger seizes on it as a weapon with which to strike; and I had now so completely unsaid to myself all that I once had thought of evil, that to put it in words seemed a gratuitous injury to me and insult to him.

A day or two after our arrival in Munich a reaction began steadily to set in. Ashamed as I was of my suspicions, I could not altogether banish from my mind the incident which had awakened them. The image of that false beard would mingle with my thoughts. I was vaguely uncomfortable at the idea of Bourgonef's carrying about with him obvious materials of disguise. In itself this would have had little significance; but coupled with the fact that his devoted servant was—in spite of all Bourgonef's eulogies—repulsively ferocious in aspect, capable, as I could not help believing, of any brutality,—the suggestion was unpleasant. You will understand that having emphatically acquitted Bourgonef in my mind, I did not again distinctly charge him with any complicity in the mysterious murder; on the contrary, I should indignantly have repelled such a thought; but the uneasy sense of some mystery about him, coupled with the accessories of disguise, and the aspect of the servant, gave rise to dim, shadowy forebodings which ever and anon passed across my mind.

Did it ever occur to you, reader, to reflect on the depths of deceit which lie still and dark even in the honestest minds? Society repose on a thin crust of convention, underneath which lie fathomless possibilities of crime, and consequently suspicions of crime. Friendship, however close and dear, is not free from its reserves, unspoken beliefs, more or less suppressed opinions. The man whom you would indignantly defend against any accusation brought by another, so confident are you in his unshakable integrity, you may yourself momentarily suspect of crimes far exceeding those which you repudiate. Indeed, I have known sagacious men hold that perfect frankness in expressing the thoughts is a sure sign of imperfect friendship; something is always suppressed; and it is not he who loves you that "tells you candidly what he thinks" of your person, your pretensions, your children, or your poems. Perfect candor is dictated by envy, or some other unfriendly feeling, making friendship a stalking-horse, under cover of which it shoots the arrow which will rankle. Friendship is candid only when the candor is urgent—meant to avert impending danger or to rectify an error. The candor which is an impertinence never springs from friendship. Love is sympathetic.

I do not, of course, mean to intimate that my feeling for Bourgonef was of that deep kind which justifies the name of friendship. I only want to say that in our social relations we are constantly hiding from each other, under the smiles and courtesies of friendly interest, thoughts which, if expressed, would destroy all possible communion—and that, nevertheless, we are not insincere in our smiles and courtesies; and therefore there is nothing paradoxical in my having felt great admiration for Bourgonef, and great pleasure in his society, while all the time there was deep down in the recesses of my thoughts an uneasy sense of a dark mystery which possibly connected him with a dreadful crime.

This feeling was roused into greater activity by an incident which now occurred. One morning I went to Bourgonef's room, which was at some distance from mine on the same floor, intending to propose a visit to the sculpture at the Glyptothek. To my surprise I found Ivan the serf standing before the closed door. He looked at me



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like a mastiff about to spring; and intimated by significant gestures that I was not allowed to enter the room. Concluding that his master was occupied in some way, and desired not to be disturbed, I merely signified by a nod that my visit was of no consequence, and went out. On returning about an hour afterwards I saw Ivan putting three pink letters into the letter-box of the hotel. I attached no significance to this very ordinary fact at the time, but went up to my room and began writing my letters, one of which was to my lawyer, sending him an important receipt. The dinner-bell sounded before I had half finished this letter; but I wrote on, determined to have done with it at once, in case the afternoon should offer any expedition with Bourgonef.

At dinner he quietly intimated that Ivan had informed him of my visit, and apologized for not having been able to see me. I, of course, assured him that no apology was necessary, and that we had plenty of time to visit sculpture together without intruding on his private hours. He informed me that he was that afternoon going to pay a visit to Schwanthaler, the sculptor, and if I desired it, he would ask permission on another occasion to take me with him. I jumped at the proposal, as may be supposed.

Dinner over, I strolled into the Englische Garten, and had my coffee and cigar there. On my return I was vexed to find that in the hurry of finishing my letters I had sealed the one to my lawyer, and had not enclosed the receipt which had been the object of writing. Fortunately it was not too late. Descending to the bureau of the hotel, I explained my mistake to the head-waiter, who unlocked the letter-box to search for my letter. It was found at once, for there were only seven or eight in the box. Among these my eye naturally caught the three pink letters which I had that morning seen Ivan drop into the box; but although they were SEEN by me they were not NOTICED at the time, my mind being solely occupied with rectifying the stupid blunder I had made.

Once more in my own room a sudden revelation startled me. Everyone knows what it is to have details come under the eye which the mind first interprets long after the eye ceases to rest upon them. The impressions are received passively; but they are registered, and can be calmly read whenever the mind is in activity. It was so now. I suddenly, as if now for the first time, saw that the addresses on Bourgonef's letters were written in a fluent, masterly hand, bold in character, and with a certain sweep which might have come from a painter. The thrill which this vision gave will be intelligible when you remember that Bourgonef had lost or pretended to have lost his right arm, and was, as I before intimated, far from dexterous with his left. That no man recently thrown upon the use of a left hand could have written those addresses was too evident. What, then, was the alternative? The empty sleeve was an imposture! At once the old horrible suspicion returned, and this time with tenfold violence, and with damnatory confirmation.

Pressing my temples between my hands, I tried to be calm and to survey the evidence without precipitation; but for some time the conflict of thoughts was too violent. Whatever might be the explanation, clear it was that Bourgonef, for some purposes, was practising a deception, and had, as I knew, other means of disguising his appearance. This, on the most favorable interpretation, branded him with suspicion. This excluded him from the circle of honest men.

But did it connect him with the murder of Lieschen Lehfeldt? In my thought it did so indubitably; but I was aware of the difficulty of making this clear to anyone else.

## VI. FIRST LOVE

If the reader feels that my suspicions were not wholly unwarranted, were indeed inevitable, he will not laugh at me on learning that once more these suspicions were set aside, and the fact—the damnatory fact, as I regarded it—discovered by me so accidentally, and, I thought, providentially, was robbed of all its significance by Bourgonef himself casually and carelessly avowing it in conversation, just as one may avow a secret infirmity, with some bitterness, but without any implication of deceit in its concealment.

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I was the more prepared for this revulsion of feeling, by the difficulty I felt in maintaining my suspicions in the presence of one so gentle and so refined. He had come into my room that evening to tell me of his visit to Schwanthaler, and of the sculptor's flattering desire to make my personal acquaintance. He spoke of Schwanthaler, and his earnest efforts in art, with so much enthusiasm, and was altogether so charming, that I felt abashed before him, incapable of ridding myself of the dreadful suspicions, yet incapable of firmly believing him to be what I thought. But more than this, there came the new interest awakened in me by his story; and when, in the course of his story, he accidentally disclosed the fact that he had not lost his arm, all my suspicions vanished at once.

We had got, as usual, upon politics, and were differing more than usual, because he gave greater prominence to his sympathy with the Red Republicans. He accused me of not being "thorough-going," which I admitted. This he attributed to the fact of my giving a divided heart to politics—a condition natural enough at my age, and with my hopes. "Well," said I, laughing, "you don't mean to take a lofty stand upon your few years' seniority. If my age renders it natural, does yours profoundly alter such a conviction?"

"My age, no. But you have the hopes of youth. I have none. I am banished for ever from the joys and sorrows of domestic life; and therefore, to live at all, must consecrate my soul to great abstractions and public affairs."

"But why banished, unless self-banished?"

"Woman's love is impossible. You look incredulous. I do not allude to this," he said, taking up the empty sleeve, and by so doing sending a shiver through me.

"The loss of your arm," I said—and my voice trembled slightly, for I felt that a crisis was at hand—"although a misfortune to you, would really be an advantage in gaining a woman's affections. Women are so romantic, and their imaginations are so easily touched!"

"Yes," he replied bitterly; "but the trouble is that I have not lost my arm."

I started. He spoke bitterly, yet calmly. I awaited his explanation in great suspense.

"To have lost my arm in battle, or even by an accident, would perhaps have lent me a charm in woman's eyes. But, as I said, my arm hangs by my side—withered, unpresentable."

I breathed again. He continued in the same tone, and without noticing my looks.

"But it is not this which banishes me. Woman's love might be hoped for, had I far worse infirmities. The cause lies deeper. It lies in my history. A wall of granite has grown up between me and the sex."

"But, my dear fellow, do you—wounded, as I presume to guess, by some unworthy woman—extend the fault of one to the whole sex? Do you despair of finding another true, because a first was false?"

"They are all false," he exclaimed with energy. "Not, perhaps, all false from inherent viciousness, though many are that, but false because their inherent weakness renders them incapable of truth. Oh! I know the catalogue of their good qualities. They are often pitiful, self-devoting, generous; but they are so by fits and starts, just as they are cruel, remorseless, exacting, by fits and starts. They have no constancy—they are too weak to be constant even in evil; their minds are all impressions; their actions are all the issue of immediate promptings. Swayed by the fleeting impulses of the hour, they have only one persistent, calculable motive on which reliance can always be placed—that motive is vanity; you are always sure of them there. It is from vanity they are good—from vanity they are evil; their devotion and their desertion equally vanity. I know them. To me they have disclosed the shallows of their natures. God! how I have suffered from them!"

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A deep, low exclamation, half sob, half curse, closed his tirade. He remained silent for a few minutes, looking on the floor, then, suddenly turning his eyes upon me, said:

"Were you ever in Heidelberg?"

"Never."

"I thought all your countrymen went there? Then you will never have heard anything of my story. Shall I tell you how my youth was blighted? Will you care to listen?"

"It would interest me much."

"I had reached the age of seven—and—twenty," he began, "without having once known even the vague stirrings of the passion of love. I admired many women, and courted the admiration of them all; but I was as yet not only heart—whole, but, to use your Shakespeare's phrase, Cupid had not tapped me on the shoulder.

"This detail is not unimportant in my story. You may possibly have observed that in those passionate natures which reserve their force, and do not fritter away their feelings in scattered flirtations or trivial love—affairs, there is a velocity and momentum, when the movement of passion is once excited, greatly transcending all that is ever felt by expansive and expressive natures. Slow to be moved, when they do move it is with the whole mass of the heart. So it was with me. I purchased my immunity from earlier entanglements by the price of my whole life. I am not what I was. Between my past and present self there is a gulf; that gulf is dark, stormy, and profound. On the far side stands a youth of hope, energy, ambition, and unclouded happiness, with great capacities for loving; on this side a blighted manhood, with no prospects but suffering and storm."

He paused. With an effort he seemed to master the suggestions which crowded upon his memory, and continued his narrative in an equable tone.

"I had been for several weeks at Heidelberg. One of my intimate companions was Kestner, the architect, and he one day proposed to introduce me to his sister—in—law, Otilie, of whom he had repeatedly spoken to me in terms of great affection and esteem.

"We went, and we were most cordially received. Otilie justified Kestner's praises. Pretty, but not strikingly so—clever, but not obtrusively so; her soft dark eyes were frank and winning; her manner was gentle and retiring, with that dash of sentimentalism which seems native to all German girls, but without any of the ridiculous extravagance too often seen in them. I liked her all the more because I was perfectly at my ease with her, and this was rarely the case in my relations to young women. I don't enjoy their society.

"You leap at once to the conclusion that we fell in love. Your conclusion is precipitate. Seeing her continually, I grew to admire and respect her; but the significant smiles, winks, and hints of friends, pointing unmistakably at a supposed understanding existing between us, only made me more seriously examine the state of my feelings, and assured me that I was not in love. It is true that I felt a serene pleasure in her society, and that when away from her she occupied much of my thoughts. It is true that I often thought of her as a wife; and in these meditations she appeared as one eminently calculated to make a happy home. But it is no less true that during a temporary absence of hers of a few weeks I felt no sort of uneasiness, no yearning for her presence, no vacancy in my life. I knew, therefore, that it was not love which I felt.

"So much for my feelings. What of hers? They seemed very like my own. That she admired me, and was pleased to be with me, was certain. That she had a particle of fiery love for me I did not, could not believe. And it was probably this very sense of her calmness which kept my feelings quiet. For love is a flame which often can be kindled only by contact with flame. Certainly this is so in proud, reserved natures, which are chilled by any

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contact with temperature not higher than their own.

"On her return, however, from that absence I have mentioned, I was not a little fluttered by an obvious change in her manner; an impression which subsequent meetings only served to confirm. Although still very quiet, her manner had become more tender, and it had that delicious shyness which is the most exquisite of flatteries, as it is one of the most enchanting of graces. I saw her tremble slightly beneath my voice, and blush beneath my gaze.

"There was no mistaking these signs. It was clear that she loved me; and it was no less clear that I, taking fire at this discovery, was myself rapidly falling in love. I will not keep you from my story by idle reflections. Take another cigar." He rose and paced up and down the room in silence.

## VII. AGALMA

"At this juncture there arrived from Paris the woman to whom the great sorrow of my life is due. A fatalist might read in her appearance at this particular moment the signs of a prearranged doom. A few weeks later, and her arrival would have been harmless; I should have been shielded from all external influence by the absorbing force of love. But, alas! this was not to be. My fate had taken another direction. The woman had arrived whose shadow was to darken the rest of my existence. That woman was Agalma Liebenstein.

"How is it that the head which we can only see surrounded with a halo, or a shadow, when the splendors of achievement or the infamy of shame instruct our eyes, is by the uninstructed eye observed as wholly vulgar? We all profess to be physiognomists; how is it we are so lamentably mistaken in our judgments? Here was a woman in whom my ignorant eyes saw nothing at all remarkable except golden hair of unusual beauty. When I say golden, I am not speaking loosely. I do not mean red or flaxen hair, but hair actually resembling burnished gold more than anything else. Its ripples on her brow caught the light like a coronet. This was her one beauty, and it was superb. For the rest, her features were characterless. Her figure was tall and full; not graceful, but sweepingly imposing. At first I noticed nothing about her except the braided splendor of her glorious hair."

He rose, and went into his bedroom, from which he returned with a small trinket-box in his hand. This he laid open on the table, disclosing a long strand of exquisite fair hair lying on a cushion of dark-blue velvet.

"Look at that," he said. "Might it not have been cut from an angel's head?"

"It is certainly wonderful."

"It must have been hair like this which crowned the infamous head of Lucrezia Borgia," he said, bitterly. "She, too, had golden hair; but hers must have been of paler tint, like her nature."

He resumed his seat, and, fixing his eyes upon the lock, continued:

"She was one of Otilie's friends—dear friends, they called each other,—which meant that they kissed each other profusely, and told each other all their secrets, or as much as the lying nature of the sex permitted and suggested. It is, of course, impossible for me to disentangle my present knowledge from my past impressions so as to give you a clear description of what I then thought of Agalma. Enough that, as a matter of fact, I distinctly remember not to have admired her, and to have told Otilie so; and when Otilie, in surprise at my insensibility, assured me that men were in general wonderfully charmed with her (though, for her part, she had never understood why), I answered, and answered sincerely, that it might be true with the less refined order of men, but men of taste would certainly be rather repelled from her.

"This opinion of mine, or some report of it, reached Agalma.

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"It may have been the proximate cause of my sorrows. Without this stimulus to her vanity, she might have left me undisturbed. I don't know. All I know is, that over many men Agalma exercised great influence, and that over me she exercised the spell of fascination. No other word will explain her influence; for it was not based on excellences such as the mind could recognize to be attractions; it was based on a mysterious personal power, something awful in its mysteriousness, as all demoniac powers are. One source of her influence over men I think I can explain: she at once captivated and repelled them. By artful appeals to their vanity, she made them interested in her and in her opinion of them, and yet kept herself inaccessible by a pride which was the more fascinating because it always seemed about to give way. Her instinct fastened upon the weak point in those she approached. This made her seductive to men, because she flattered their weak points; and hateful to women, because she flouted and disclosed their weak points.

"Her influence over me began in the following way. One day, at a picnic, having been led by her into a conversation respecting the relative inferiority of the feminine intellect, I was forced to speak rather more earnestly than usual, when suddenly she turned to me and exclaimed in a lower voice:

"I am willing to credit anything you say; only pray don't continue talking to me so earnestly.'

"Why not?' I asked, surprised.

"She looked at me with peculiar significance, but remained silent.

"May I ask why not?' I asked.

"Because, if you do, somebody may be jealous.' There was a laughing defiance in her eye as she spoke.

"And pray, who has a right to be jealous of me?'

"Oh! you know well enough.'

"It was true; I did know; and she knew that I knew it. To my shame be it said that I was weak enough to yield to an equivocation which I now see to have been disloyal, but which I then pretended to have been no more than delicacy to Otilie. As, in point of fact, there had never been a word passed between us respecting our mutual feelings, I considered myself bound in honor to assume that there was nothing tacitly acknowledged.

"Piqued by her tone and look, I disavowed the existence of any claims upon my attention; and to prove the sincerity of my words, I persisted in addressing my attentions to her. Once or twice I fancied I caught flying glances, in which some of the company criticised my conduct, and Otilie also seemed to me unusually quiet. But her manner, though quiet, was untroubled and unchanged. I talked less to her than usual, partly because I talked so much to Agalma, and partly because I felt that Agalma's eyes were on us. But no shadow of 'temper' or reserve darkened our interchange of speech.

"On our way back, I know not what devil prompted me to ask Agalma whether she had really been in earnest in her former allusion to 'somebody.'

"Yes,' she said, 'I was in earnest then.'

"And now?'

"Now I have doubts. I may have been misinformed. It's no concern of mine, anyway; but I had been given to understand. However, I admit that my own eyes have not confirmed what my ears heard.'

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"This speech was irritating on two separate grounds. It implied that people were talking freely of my attachment, which, until I had formally acknowledged it, I resented as an impertinence; and it implied that, from personal observation, Agalma doubted Otilie's feelings for me. This alarmed my quick-retreating pride! I, too, began to doubt. Once let loose on that field, imagination soon saw shapes enough to confirm any doubt. Otilie's manner certainly had seemed less tender—nay, somewhat indifferent—during the last few days. Had the arrival of that heavy lout, her cousin, anything to do with this change?

"Not to weary you by recalling all the unfolding stages of this miserable story with the minuteness of detail which my own memory morbidly lingers on, I will hurry to the catastrophe. I grew more and more doubtful of the existence in Otilie's mind of any feeling stronger than friendship for me; and as this doubt strengthened, there arose the flattering suspicion that I was becoming an object of greater interest to Agalma, who had quite changed her tone towards me, and had become serious in her speech and manner. Weeks passed. Otilie had fallen from her pedestal, and had taken her place among agreeable acquaintances. One day I suddenly learned that Otilie was engaged to her cousin.

"You will not wonder that Agalma, who before this had exercised great fascination over me, now doubly became an object of the most tender interest. I fell madly in love. Hitherto I had never known that passion. My feeling for Otilie I saw was but the inarticulate stammerings of the mighty voice which now sounded through the depths of my nature. The phrase, madly in love, is no exaggeration; madness alone knows such a fever of the brain, such a tumult of the heart. It was not that reason was overpowered; on the contrary, reason was intensely active, but active with that logic of flames which lights up the vision of maniacs.

"Although, of course, my passion was but too evident to every one, I dreaded its premature avowal, lest I should lose her; and almost equally dreaded delay, lest I should suffer from that also. At length the avowal was extorted from me by jealousy of a brilliant Pole—Korinski—who had recently appeared in our circle, and was obviously casting me in the shade by his superior advantages of novelty, of personal attraction, and of a romantic history. She accepted me; and now, for a time, I was the happiest of mortals. The fever of the last few weeks was abating; it gave place to a deep tide of hopeful joy. Could I have died then! Could I have even died shortly afterwards, when I knew the delicious mystery of a jealousy not too absorbing! For you must know that my happiness was brief. Jealousy, to which all passion of a deep and exacting power is inevitably allied, soon began to disturb my content. Agalma had no tenderness. She permitted caresses, never returned them. She was ready enough to listen to all my plans for the future, so long as the recital moved amid details of fortune and her position in society—that is, so long as her vanity was interested; but I began to observe with pain that her thoughts never rested on tender domesticities and poetic anticipations. This vexed me more and more. The very spell which she exercised over me made her want of tenderness more intolerable. I yearned for her love—for some sympathy with the vehement passion which was burning within me; and she was as marble.

"You will not be surprised to hear that I reproached her bitterly for her indifference. That is the invariable and fatal folly of lovers—they seem to imagine that a heart can be scolded into tenderness! To my reproaches she at first answered impatiently that they were unjust; that it was not her fault if her nature was less expansive than mine; and that it was insulting to be told she was indifferent to the man whom she had consented to marry. Later she answered my reproaches with haughty defiance, one day intimating that if I really thought what I said, and repented our engagement, it would be most prudent for us to separate ere it was too late. This quieted me for a while. But it brought no balm to my wounds.

"And now fresh tortures were added. Korinski became quite marked in his attentions to Agalma. These she received with evident delight; so much so, that I saw by the glances of others that they were scandalized at it; and this, of course, increased my pain. My renewed reproaches only made her manner colder to me; to Korinski it became what I would gladly have seen towards myself.

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"The stress and agitation of those days were too much for me. I fell ill, and for seven weeks lay utterly prostrate. On recovering, this note was handed to me. It was from Agalma."

Bourgonef here held out to me a crumpled letter, and motioned that I should open it and read. It ran thus:

"I have thought much of what you have so often said, that it would be for the happiness of both if our unfortunate engagement were set aside. That you have a real affection for me I believe, and be assured that I once had a real affection for you; not, perhaps, the passionate love which a nature so exacting as yours demands, and which I earnestly hope it may one day find, but a genuine affection nevertheless, which would have made me proud to share your lot. But it would be uncandid in me to pretend that this now exists. Your incessant jealousy, the angry feelings excited by your reproaches, the fretful irritation in which for some time we have lived together, has completely killed what love I had, and I no longer feel prepared to risk the happiness of both of us by a marriage. What you said the other night convinces me that it is even your desire our engagement should cease. It is certainly mine. Let us try to think kindly of each other and meet again as friends.

AGALMA LIEBENSTEIN."

When I had read this and returned it to him, he said:

"You see that this was written on the day I was taken ill. Whether she knew that I was helpless I know not. At any rate, she never sent to inquire after me. She went off to Paris; Korinski followed her; and—as I quickly learned on going once more into society— they were married! Did you ever, in the whole course of your experience, hear of such heartless conduct?"

Bourgonef asked this with a ferocity which quite startled me. I did not answer him; for, in truth, I could not see that Agalma had been very much to blame, even as he told the story, and felt sure that could I have heard her version it would have worn a very different aspect. That she was cold, and disappointed him, might be true enough, but there was no crime; and I perfectly understood how thoroughly odious he must have made himself to her by his exactions and reproaches. I understood this, perhaps, all the better, because in the course of his narrative Bourgonef had revealed to me aspects of his nature which were somewhat repulsive. Especially was I struck with his morbid vanity, and his readiness to impute low motives to others. This unpleasant view of his character—a character in many respects so admirable for its generosity and refinement—was deepened as he went on, instead of awaiting my reply to his question.

"For a wrong so measureless, you will naturally ask what measureless revenge I sought."

The idea had not occurred to me; indeed I could see no wrong, and this notion of revenge was somewhat startling in such a case.

"I debated it long," he continued. "I felt that since I was prevented from arresting any of the evil to myself, I could at least mature my plans for an adequate discharge of just retributions on her. It reveals the impotence resulting from the trammels of modern civilization, that while the possibilities of wrong are infinite, the openings for vengeance are few and contemptible. Only when a man is thrown upon the necessities of this 'wild justice' does he discover how difficult vengeance really is. Had Agalma been my wife, I could have wreaked my wrath upon her, with assurance that some of the torture she inflicted on me was to fall on her. Not having this power what was I to do? Kill her? That would have afforded one moment of exquisite satisfaction—but to her it would have been simply death—and I wanted to kill the heart."

He seemed working with an insane passion, so that I regarded him with disgust, mingled with some doubts as to what horrors he was about to relate.

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"My plan was chosen. The only way to reach her heart was to strike through her husband. For several hours daily I practised with the pistol, until—in spite of only having a left hand—I acquired fatal skill. But this was not enough. Firing at a mark is simple work. Firing at a man—especially one holding a pistol pointed at you—is altogether different. I had too often heard of 'crack shots' missing their men, to rely confidently on my skill in the shooting gallery. It was necessary that my eye and hand should be educated to familiarity with the real object. Part of the cause why duelists miss their man is from the trepidation of fear. I was without fear. At no moment in my life have I been afraid; and the chance of being shot by Korinski I counted as nothing. The other cause is unfamiliarity with the mark. This I secured myself against by getting a lay figure of Korinski's height, dressing it to resemble him, placing a pistol in its hand, and then practising at this mark in the woods. After a short time I could send a bullet through the thorax without taking more than a hasty glance at the figure.

"Thus prepared, I started for Paris. But you will feel for me when you learn that my hungry heart was baffled of its vengeance, and baffled for ever. Agalma had been carried off by scarlet fever. Korinski had left Paris, and I felt no strong promptings to follow him, and wreak on him a futile vengeance. It was on HER my wrath had been concentrated, and I gnashed my teeth at the thought that she had escaped me.

"My story is ended. The months of gloomy depression which succeeded, now that I was no longer sustained by the hope of vengeance, I need not speak of. My existence was desolate, and even now the desolation continues over the whole region of the emotions. I carry a dead heart within me."

## VIII. A SECOND VICTIM

Bourgonef's story has been narrated with some fullness, though in less detail than he told it, in order that the reader may understand its real bearings on MY story. Without it, the motives which impelled the strange pertinacity of my pursuit would have been unintelligible. I have said that a very disagreeable impression remained on my mind respecting certain aspects of his character, and I felt somewhat ashamed of my imperfect sagacity in having up to this period been entirely blind to those aspects. The truth is, every human being is a mystery, and remains so to the last. We fancy we know a character; we form a distinct conception of it; for years that conception remains unmodified, and suddenly the strain of some emergency, of the incidental stimulus of new circumstances, reveals qualities not simply unexpected, but flatly contradictory of our previous conception. We judge of a man by the angle he subtends to our eye—only thus CAN we judge of him; and this angle depends on the relation his qualities and circumstances bear to our interests and sympathies. Bourgonef had charmed me intellectually; morally I had never come closer to him than in the sympathies of public questions and abstract theories. His story had disclosed hidden depths.

My old suspicions reappeared, and a conversation we had two days afterwards helped to strengthen them.

We had gone on a visit to Schwanthaler, the sculptor, at his tiny little castle of Schwaneck, a few miles from Munich. The artist was out for a walk, but we were invited to come in and await his return, which would be shortly; and meanwhile Bourgonef undertook to show me over the castle, interesting as a bit of modern Gothic, realizing on a diminutive scale a youthful dream of the sculptor's. When our survey was completed—and it did not take long—we sat at one of the windows and enjoyed a magnificent prospect. "It is curious," said Bourgonef, "to be shut up here in this imitation of medieval masonry, where every detail speaks of the dead past, and to think of the events now going on in Paris which must find imitators all over Europe, and which open to the mind such vistas of the future. What a grotesque anachronism is this Gothic castle, built in the same age as that which sees a reforming pope!"

"Yes; but is not the reforming pope himself an anachronism?"

"As a Catholic," here he smiled, intimating that his orthodoxy was not very stringent, "I cannot admit that; as a



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Protestant, you must admit that if there must be a pope, he must in these days be a reformer, or—give up his temporal power. Not that I look on Pio Nono as more than a precursor; he may break ground, and point the way, but he is not the man to lead Europe out of its present slough of despond, and under the headship of the Church found a new and lasting republic. We want a Hildebrand, one who will be to the nineteenth century as Gregory was to the eleventh."

"Do you believe in such a possibility? Do you think the Roman pontiff can ever again sway the destinies of Europe?"

"I can hardly say I believe it; yet I see the possibility of such an opening if the right man were to arise. But I fear he will not arise; or if he should, the Conclave will stifle him. Yet there is but one alternative: either Europe must once more join in a crusade with a pope at the head, or it must hoist the red flag. There is no other issue."

"Heaven preserve us from both! And I think we shall be preserved from the Pope by the rottenness of the Church; from the drapeau rouge by the indignation and horror of all honest men. You see how the Provisional Government has resisted the insane attempt of the fanatics to make the red flag accepted as the national banner?"

"Yes; and it is the one thing which dashes my pleasure in the new revolution. It is the one act of weakness which the Government has exhibited; a concession which will be fatal unless it be happily set aside by the energetic party of action."

"An act of weakness? say rather an act of strength. A concession? say rather the repudiation of anarchy, the assertion of law and justice."

"Not a bit. It was concession to the fears of the timid, and to the vanity of the French people. The tricolor is a French flag—not the banner of humanity. It is because the tricolor has been identified with the victories of France that it appeals to the vanity of the vainest of people. They forget that it is the flag of a revolution which failed, and of an empire which was one perpetual outrage to humanity. Whereas the red is new; it is the symbol of an energetic, thorough-going creed. If it carries terror with it, so much the better. The tyrants and the timid should be made to tremble."

"I had no idea you were so bloodthirsty," said I, laughing at his vehemence.

"I am not bloodthirsty at all; I am only logical and consistent. There is a mass of sophistry current in the world which sickens me. People talk of Robespierre and St. Just, two of the most virtuous men that ever lived—and of Dominic and Torquemada, two of the most single-minded—as if they were cruel and bloodthirsty, whereas they were only convinced."

"Is it from love of paradox that you defend these tigers?"

"Tigers, again—how those beasts are calumniated!"

He said this with a seriousness which was irresistibly comic. I shouted with laughter; but he continued gravely:

"You think I am joking. But let me ask you why you consider the tiger more bloodthirsty than yourself? He springs upon his food—you buy yours from the butcher. He cannot live without animal food: it is a primal necessity, and he obeys the ordained instinct. You can live on vegetables; yet you slaughter beasts of the field and birds of the air (or buy them when slaughtered), and consider yourself a model of virtue. The tiger only kills his food or his enemies; you not only kill both, but you kill one animal to make gravy for another! The tiger is less bloodthirsty than the Christian!"

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"I don't know how much of that tirade is meant to be serious; but to waive the question of the tiger's morality, do you really—I will not say sympathize,—but justify Robespierre, Dominic, St. Just, and the rest of the fanatics who have waded to their ends through blood."

"He who wills the END, wills the MEANS."

"A devil's maxim."

"But a truth. What the foolish world shrinks at as bloodthirstiness and cruelty is very often mere force and constancy of intellect. It is not that fanatics thirst for blood—far from it,—but they thirst for the triumph of their cause. Whatever obstacle lies on their path must be removed; if a torrent of blood is the only thing that will sweep it away—the torrent must sweep."

"And sweep with it all the sentiments of pity, mercy, charity, love?"

"No; these sentiments may give a sadness to the necessity; they make the deed a sacrifice, but they cannot prevent the soul from seeing the aim to which it tends."

"This is detestable doctrine! It is the sophism which has destroyed families, devastated cities, and retarded the moral progress of the world more than anything else. No single act of injustice is ever done on this earth but it tends to perpetuate the reign of iniquity. By the feelings it calls forth it keeps up the native savagery of the heart. It breeds injustice, partly by hardening the minds of those who assent, and partly by exciting the passion of revenge in those who resist."

"You are wrong. The great drag—chain on the car of progress is the faltering inconsistency of man. Weakness is more cruel than sternness. Sentiment is more destructive than logic."

The arrival of Schwanthaler was timely, for my indignation was rising. The sculptor received us with great cordiality, and in the pleasure of the subsequent hour I got over to some extent the irritation Bourgonef's talk had excited.

The next day I left Munich for the Tyrol. My parting with Bourgonef was many degrees less friendly than it would have been a week before. I had no wish to see him again, and therefore gave him no address or invitation in case he should come to England. As I rolled away in the Malleposte, my busy thoughts reviewed all the details of our acquaintance, and the farther I was carried from his presence, the more obtrusive became the suspicions which connected him with the murder of Lieschen Lehfeldt. How, or upon what motive, was indeed an utter mystery. He had not mentioned the name of Lehfeldt. He had not mentioned having before been at Nuremberg. At Heidelberg the tragedy occurred—or was Heidelberg only a mask? It occurred to me that he had first ascertained that I had never been at Heidelberg before he placed the scene of his story there.

Thoughts such as these tormented me. Imagine, then, the horror with which I heard, soon after my arrival at Salzburg, that a murder had been committed at Grosshesslohe—one of the pretty environs of Munich much resorted to by holiday folk—corresponding in all essential features with the murder at Nuremberg! In both cases the victim was young and pretty. In both cases she was found quietly lying on the ground, stabbed to the heart, without any other traces of violence. In both cases she was a betrothed bride, and the motive of the unknown assassin a mystery.

Such a correspondence in the essential features inevitably suggested an appalling mystery of unity in these crimes,—either as the crimes of one man, committed under some impulse of motiveless malignity and thirst for innocent blood—or as the equally appalling effect of IMITATION acting contagiously upon a criminal imagination; of which contagion there have been, unfortunately, too many examples—horrible crimes prompting

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certain weak and feverish imaginations, by the very horror they inspire, first to dwell on, and finally to realize their imitations.

It was this latter hypothesis which found general acceptance. Indeed it was the only one which rested upon any ground of experience. The disastrous influence of imitation, especially under the fascination of horror, was well known. The idea of any diabolical malice moving one man to pass from city to city, and there quietly single out his victims—both of them, by the very hypothesis, unrelated to him, both of them at the epoch of their lives, when

"The bosom's lord sits lightly on its throne,"

when the peace of the heart is assured, and the future is radiantly beckoning to them,—that any man should choose such victims for such crimes was too preposterous an idea long to be entertained. Unless the man were mad, the idea was inconceivable; and even a monomaniac must betray himself in such a course, because he would necessarily conceive himself to be accomplishing some supreme act of justice.

It was thus I argued; and indeed I should much have preferred to believe that one maniac were involved, rather than the contagion of crime,—since one maniac must inevitably be soon detected; whereas there were no assignable limits to the contagion of imitation. And this it was which so profoundly agitated German society. In every family in which there happened to be a bride, vague tremors could not be allayed; and the absolute powerlessness which resulted from the utter uncertainty as to the quarter in which this dreaded phantom might next appear, justified and intensified those tremors. Against such an apparition there was no conceivable safeguard. From a city stricken with the plague, from a district so stricken, flight is possible, and there are the resources of medical aid. But from a moral plague like this, what escape was possible?

So passionate and profound became the terror, that I began to share the opinion which I heard expressed, regretting the widespread publicity of the modern press, since, with many undeniable benefits, it carried also the fatal curse of distributing through households, and keeping constantly under the excitement of discussion, images of crime and horror which would tend to perpetuate and extend the excesses of individual passion. The mere dwelling long on such a topic as this was fraught with evil.

This and more I heard discussed as I hurried back to Munich. To Munich? Yes; thither I was posting with all speed. Not a shadow of doubt now remained in my mind. I knew the assassin, and was resolved to track and convict him. Do not suppose that THIS time I was led away by the vagrant activity of my constructive imagination. I had something like positive proof. No sooner had I learned that the murder had been committed at Grosshesslohe, than my thoughts at once carried me to a now memorable visit I had made there in company with Bourgonef and two young Bavarians. At the hotel where we dined, we were waited on by the niece of the landlord, a girl of remarkable beauty, who naturally excited the attention of four young men, and furnished them with a topic of conversation. One of the Bavarians had told us that she would one day be perhaps one of the wealthiest women in the country, for she was engaged to be married to a young farmer who had recently found himself, by a rapid succession of deaths, sole heir to a great brewer, whose wealth was known to be enormous.

At this moment Sophie entered bringing wine, and I saw Bourgonef slowly turn his eyes upon her with a look which then was mysterious to me, but which now spoke too plainly its dreadful meaning.

What is there in a look, you will say? Perhaps nothing; or it may be everything. To my unsuspecting, unenlightened perception, Bourgonef's gaze was simply the melancholy and half-curious gaze which such a man might be supposed to cast upon a young woman who had been made the topic of an interesting discourse. But to my mind, enlightened as to his character, and instructed as to his peculiar feelings arising from his own story, the gaze was charged with horror. It marked a victim. The whole succession of events rose before me in vivid distinctness; the separate details of suspicion gathered into unity.

## Bourgonef

Great as was Bourgonef's command over his features, he could not conceal uneasiness as well as surprise at my appearance at the table d'hote in Munich. I shook hands with him, putting on as friendly a mask as I could, and replied to his question about my sudden return by attributing it to unexpected intelligence received at Salzburg.

"Nothing serious, I hope?"

"Well, I'm afraid it will prove very serious," I said. "But we shall see. Meanwhile my visit to the Tyrol must be given up or postponed."

"Do you remain here, then?"

"I don't know what my movements will be."

Thus I had prepared him for any reserve or strangeness in my manner; and I had concealed from him the course of my movements; for at whatever cost, I was resolved to follow him and bring him to justice.

But how? Evidence I had none that could satisfy any one else, however convincing it might be to my own mind. Nor did there seem any evidence forthcoming from Grosshesslohe. Sophie's body had been found in the afternoon lying as if asleep in one of the by-paths of the wood. No marks of a struggle; no traces of the murderer. Her affianced lover, who was at Augsburg, on hearing of her fate, hurried to Grosshesslohe, but could throw no light on the murder, could give no hint as to a possible motive for the deed. But this entire absence of evidence, or even ground of suspicion, only made MY case the stronger. It was the motiveless malignity of the deed which fastened it on Bourgonef; or rather, it was the absence of any known motive elsewhere which assured me that I had detected the motive in him.

Should I communicate my conviction to the police? It was possible that I might impress them with at least sufficient suspicion to warrant his examination—and in that case the truth might be elicited; for among the many barbarities and iniquities of the criminal procedure in Continental States which often press heavily on the innocent, there is this compensating advantage, that the pressure on the guilty is tenfold heavier. If the innocent are often unjustly punished—imprisoned and maltreated before their innocence can be established—the guilty seldom escape. In England we give the criminal not only every chance of escape, but many advantages. The love of fair-play is carried to excess. It seems at times as if the whole arrangements of our procedure were established with a view to giving a criminal not only the benefit of every doubt, but of every loophole through which he can slip. Instead of this, the Continental procedure goes on the principle of closing up every loophole, and of inventing endless traps into which the accused may fall. We warn the accused not to say anything that may be prejudicial to him. They entangle him in contradictions and confessions which disclose his guilt.

Knowing this, I thought it very likely that, however artful Bourgonef might be, a severe examination might extort from him sufficient confirmation of my suspicion to warrant further procedure. But knowing also that THIS resort was open to me when all others had failed, I resolved to wait and watch.

## IX. FINALE

Two days passed, and nothing occurred. My watching seemed hopeless, and I resolved to try the effect of a disguised interrogatory. It might help to confirm my already settled conviction, if it did not elicit any new evidence.

Seated in Bourgonef's room, in the old place, each with a cigar, and chatting as of old on public affairs, I gradually approached the subject of the recent murder.

## Bourgonef

"Is it not strange," I said, "that both these crimes should have happened while we were casually staying in both places?"

"Perhaps we are the criminals," he replied, laughing. I shivered slightly at this audacity. He laughed as he spoke, but there was a hard, metallic, and almost defiant tone in his voice which exasperated me.

"Perhaps we are," I answered, quietly. He looked full at me; but I was prepared, and my face told nothing. I added, as in explanation, "The crime being apparently contagious, we may have brought the infection from Nuremberg."

"Do you believe in that hypothesis of imitation?"

"I don't know what to believe. Do you believe in there being only one murderer? It seems such a preposterous idea. We must suppose him, at any rate, to be a maniac."

"Not necessarily. Indeed there seems to have been too much artful contrivance in both affairs, not only in the selection of the victims, but in the execution of the schemes. Cunning as maniacs often are they are still maniacs, and betray themselves."

"If not a maniac," said I, hoping to pique him, "he must be a man of stupendous and pitiable vanity,—perhaps one of your constant-minded friends, whom you refuse to call bloodthirsty."

"Constant-minded, perhaps; but why pitifully vain?"

"Why? Because only a diseased atrocity of imagination, stimulating a nature essentially base and weak in its desire to make itself conspicuous, would or could suggest such things. The silly youth who 'fired the Ephesian dome,' the vain idiot who set fire to York Minster, the miserable Frenchmen who have committed murder and suicide with a view of making their exit striking from a world in which their appearance had been contemptible, would all sink into insignificance beside the towering infamy of baseness which—for the mere love of producing an effect on the minds of men, and thus drawing their attention upon him, which otherwise would never have marked him at all—could scheme and execute crimes so horrible and inexcusable. In common charity to human nature, let us suppose the wretch is mad; because otherwise his miserable vanity would be too loathsome." I spoke with warmth and bitterness, which increased as I perceived him wincing under the degradation of my contempt.

"If his motive WERE vanity," he said, "no doubt it would be horrible; but may it not have been revenge?"

"Revenge!" I exclaimed; "what! on innocent women?"

"You assume their innocence."

"Good God! do you know anything to the contrary?"

"Not I. But as we are conjecturing, I may as well conjecture it to have been the desire to produce a startling effect."

"How do you justify your conjecture?"

"Simply enough. We have to suppose a motive; let us say it was revenge, and see whether that will furnish a clue."

## Bourgonef

"But it can't. The two victims were wholly unconnected with each other by any intermediate acquaintances, consequently there can have been no common wrong or common enmity in existence to furnish food for vengeance."

"That may be so; it may also be that the avenger made them vicarious victims."

"How so?"

"It is human nature. Did you ever observe a thwarted child striking in its anger the unoffending nurse, destroying its toys to discharge its wrath? Did you ever see a schoolboy, unable to wreak his anger on the bigger boy who has just struck him, turn against the nearest smaller boy and beat him? Did you ever know a schoolmaster, angered by one of the boy's parents, vent his pent-up spleen upon the unoffending class? Did you ever see a subaltern punished because an officer had been reprimanded? These are familiar examples of vicarious vengeance. When the soul is stung to fury, it must solace itself by the discharge of that fury—it must relieve its pain by the sight of pain in others. We are so constituted. We need sympathy above all things. In joy we cannot bear to see others in distress; in distress we see the joy of others with dismal envy which sharpens our pain. That is human nature."

"And," I exclaimed, carried away by my indignation, "you suppose that the sight of these two happy girls, beaming with the quiet joy of brides, was torture to some miserable wretch who had lost his bride."

I had gone too far. His eyes looked into mine. I read in his that he divined the whole drift of my suspicion—the allusion made to himself. There often passes into a look more than words can venture to express. In that look he read that he was discovered, and I read that he had recognized it. With perfect calmness, but with a metallic ring in his voice which was like the clash of swords, he said:

"I did not say that I supposed this; but as we were on the wide field of conjecture—utterly without evidence one way or the other, having no clue either to the man or his motives—I drew from the general principles of human nature a conclusion which was just as plausible—or absurd if you like—as the conclusion that the motive must have been vanity."

"As you say, we are utterly without evidence, and conjecture drifts aimlessly from one thing to another. After all, the most plausible explanation is that of a contagion of imitation."

I said this in order to cover my previous imprudence. He was not deceived—though for a few moments I fancied he was—but replied:

"I am not persuaded of that either. The whole thing is a mystery, and I shall stay here some time in the hope of seeing it cleared up. Meanwhile, for a subject of conjecture, let me show you something on which your ingenuity may profitably be employed."

He rose and passed into his bedroom. I heard him unlocking and rummaging the drawers, and was silently reproaching myself for my want of caution in having spoken as I had done, though it was now beyond all doubt that he was the murderer, and that his motive had been rightly guessed; but with this self-reproach there was mingled a self-gratulation at the way I had got out of the difficulty, as I fancied.

He returned, and as he sat down I noticed that the lower part of his surtout was open. He always wore a long frogged and braided coat reaching to the knees—as I now know, for the purpose of concealing the arm which hung (as he said, withered) at his side. The two last fastenings were now undone.

He held in his hand a tiny chain made of very delicate wire. This he gave me, saying:

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"Now what would you conjecture that to be?"

"Had it come into my hands without any remark, I should have said it was simply a very exquisite bit of ironwork; but your question points to something more out of the way."

"It IS iron-work," he said.

Could I be deceived? A third fastening of his surtout was undone! I had seen but two a moment ago.

"And what am I to conjecture?" I asked.

"Where that iron came from? It was NOT from a mine." I looked at it again, and examined it attentively. On raising my eyes in inquiry—fortunately with an expression of surprise, since what met my eyes would have startled a cooler man—I saw the fourth fastening undone!

"You look surprised," he continued, "and will be more surprised when I tell you that the iron in your hands once floated in the circulation of a man. It is made from human blood."

"Human blood!" I murmured.

He went on expounding the physiological wonders of the blood,—how it carried, dissolved in its currents, a proportion of iron and earths; how this iron was extracted by chemists and exhibited as a curiosity; and how this chain had been manufactured from such extracts. I heard every word, but my thoughts were hurrying to and fro in the agitation of a supreme moment. That there was a dagger underneath that coat—that in a few moments it would flash forth—that a death-struggle was at hand,—I knew well. My safety depended on presence of mind. That incalculable rapidity with which, in critical moments, the mind surveys all the openings and resources of an emergency, had assured me that there was no weapon within reach—that before I could give an alarm the tiger would be at my throat, and that my only chance was to keep my eyes fixed upon him, ready to spring on him the moment the next fastening was undone, and before he could use his arm.

At last the idea occurred to me, that as, with a wild beast, safety lies in attacking him just before he attacks you, so with this beast my best chance was audacity. Looking steadily into his face, I said slowly:

"And you would like to have such a chain made from my blood." I rose as I spoke. He remained sitting, but was evidently taken aback.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"I mean," said I, sternly, "that your coat is unfastened, and that if another fastening is loosened in my presence, I fell you to the earth."

"You're a fool!" he exclaimed.

I moved towards the door, keeping my eye fixed upon him as he sat pale and glaring at me.

"YOU are a fool," I said—"and worse, if you stir."

At this moment, I know not by what sense, as if I had eyes at the back of my head, I was aware of some one moving behind me, yet I dared not look aside. Suddenly two mighty folds of darkness seemed to envelop me like arms. A powerful scent ascended my nostrils. There was a ringing in my ears, a beating at my heart. Darkness came on, deeper and deeper, like huge waves. I seemed growing to gigantic stature. The waves rolled on faster

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and faster. The ringing became a roaring. The beating became a throbbing. Lights flashed across the darkness. Forms moved before me. On came the waves hurrying like a tide, and I sank deeper and deeper into this mighty sea of darkness. Then all was silent. Consciousness was still.

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How long I remained unconscious, I cannot tell. But it must have been some considerable time. When consciousness once more began to dawn within me, I found myself lying on a bed surrounded by a group of eager, watching faces, and became aware of a confused murmur of whispering going on around me. "Er Lebt" (he lives) were the words which greeted my opening eyes—words which I recognized as coming from my landlord.

I had had a very narrow escape. Another moment and I should not have lived to tell the tale. The dagger that had already immolated two of Bourgonef's objects of vengeance would have been in my breast. As it was, at the very moment when the terrible Ivan had thrown his arms around me and was stifling me with chloroform, one of the servants of the hotel, alarmed or attracted by curiosity at the sound of high words within the room, had ventured to open the door to see what was going on. The alarm had been given, and Bourgonef had been arrested and handed over to the police. Ivan, however, had disappeared; nor were the police ever able to find him. This mattered comparatively little. Ivan without his master was no more redoubtable than any other noxious animal. As an accomplice, as an instrument to execute the will of a man like Bourgonef, he was a danger to society. The directing intelligence withdrawn, he sank to the level of the brute. I was not uneasy, therefore, at his having escaped. Sufficient for me that the real criminal, the mind that had conceived and directed those fearful murders, was at last in the hands of justice. I felt that my task had been fully accomplished when Bourgonef's head fell on the scaffold.