# Stronger than Death

## Or Spirite

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TO THE OTHER TWO
OF THE TRIO,
WITH THE BEST OF GOOD WISHES,
THIS TRANSLATION IS
DEDICATED.

CHICAGO, JULY 1, 1890

# STRONGER THAN DEATH

OR

# SPIRITE.

## I.

GUY DE MALIVERT was stretched out, half reclining, in a large, comfortable arm-chair before a brightly blazing fire. He had apparently determined to pass at home one of those quiet evenings which the fatigue caused by the whirl of social pleasures occasionally exacts of the fashionable youth of the day. His dress was a happy mixture of comfort and elegance: a smoking-jacket of black velvet, adorned with black silk frogs; a loose shirt of soft, thin silk; wide trousers of red flannel, and morocco slippers in which danced nervously his slender, arched foot. With his body free from all uncomfortable pressure, thoroughly at his ease in these soft, pliant garments, Guy de Malivert, who had partaken at home of a simple but perfectly cooked dinner, washed down by two or three glasses of rare old Burgundy which had made the voyage to India and back, ex-

perienced that sort of physical beatitude which is the result of the perfect accord of all the different members of the body. He was happy, although there was no particular reason for his being so.

Close beside him, a lamp, hung in a crescent of old sea-green crackel-ware, diffused a soft, whitish radiance from its opaque globe, like that of a moon partially veiled by a slight mist. The light fell upon a volume which he held carelessly in his hand, and which was no other than a copy of Longfellow's Evangeline.

Guy certainly admired the work of the greatest poet which the young country of America has yet produced, but he was in that lazy state of mind when the absence of all thought is preferable to the most beautiful of ideas expressed in the most sublime of phrases. He read a few lines, and then letting the book fall into his lap, he rested his head on the soft, fluffy covering of the arm-chair, and abandoned himself to the enjoyment of a complete inertia of mind and body. The warm air of the room seemed to gently caress him, and all his surroundings whispered of rest, comfort, silence, and peace. The only sounds that broke the stillness were

the hissing of a gas-jet which had been turned up a trifle too high, and the ticking of the clock whose pendulum marked the flight of time with low, rhythmical voice.

It was the depth of winter; the snow, which had recently fallen, deadened the rumble of the few carriages which rolled through that deserted quarter, for Guy lived in one of the least frequented streets of the Fauborg Saint-Germain. Ten o'clock rang out, and the lazy fellow congratulated himself that he was not arrayed in a dress-coat and a white cravat, leaning against the wall of the ball-room at some embassy, and gazing, perforce, at the scrawny shoulder-blades of some old dowager disporting herself in a gown cut altogether too low. Although there reigned in the room the carefully regulated temperature of a conservatory, one realized that it was cold outside, were it only from the briskness with which the fire burned and the profound silence of the streets. The superb Angora, Malivert's companion on this evening devoted to *dolce far niente*, had drawn near the hearth to bask in the flames, which threw a red glow upon its white, silky fur, and the gilded fender alone prevented it

from stretching itself out at full length amidst the ashes.

The room in which Guy de Malivert was tasting these peaceful, domestic delights was a combination of library and studio. It was a spacious, lofty apartment in the highest story of the pavilion which Guy inhabited, and which was situated between a broad court-yard and a garden planted with superb old trees, worthy of a royal forest, and found only in the aristocratic Fauborg; for to produce such trees time is an imperative necessity, and parvenus can not improvise them to give shade to their mansions built in a hurry, lest their newly filled purses may be depleted before they can take possession.

The walls of the room were hung with dun-colored leather, and the ceiling was composed of Norwegian fir, with heavy cross-beams of old oak. These dark, sober colors displayed to admirable advantage the paintings, water-colors, and etchings suspended on the walls of this species of museum where Malivert had arranged his collection of curious and fantastic objects of art. Oaken book-cases, low enough not to interfere with the pictures, lined all sides

of the room, forming a sort of wainscoting, which was broken by only one door. The books with which the shelves were filled would have surprised anyone who examined them, on account of the wide divergence of their character; one would have said that the library of an artist and that of a savant had been mingled together. Side by side with the classic poets of all ages and all countries—Homer, Hesiod, Virgil, Dante, Ariosto, Ronsard, Shakspere, Milton, Goethe, Schiller, Byron, Victor Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Musset, Edgar Poe—reposed the Symbolique of Creuzer, the Mécanique Céleste of Laplace, Arago's Astronomy, Burdach's Physiology, Humboldt's Cosmos, the works of Claude Bernard and of Berthelot, and other volumes treating of pure science. Guy de Malivert was, however, no savant. He had been anything but a hard student at college; but after his graduation, and when his education was supposed to be finished, it seemed to him a shame to be ignorant of all the splendid discoveries which form the glory of our century. He applied himself, therefore, to the enrichment of his mind, and was eventually quite capable of discoursing intelligently

upon almost any subject—astronomy, cosmogony, electricity, steam, photography, chemistry, micrography, or spontaneous generation. He listened with due appreciation of what was said, and he not infrequently astonished the person with whom he happened to be discussing any of these subjects, by the cleverness and originality of his remarks.

Such was Guy de Malivert at the age of twenty-eight or twenty-nine. The expression of his face was open, frank, and pleasing; his nose, without possessing the regularity of that of a Greek statue, was by no means lacking in refinement, and separated two large brown eyes, which met one with the brave, honest gaze of a man with nothing to hide; his rather full lips evinced a kind and sympathetic nature; his hair, of a warm chestnut, was massed above his broad, white forehead in a profusion of short, wavy curls, and a mustache of reddish-gold shaded his upper lip. In short, Malivert was what is called a handsome fellow, and upon his entrance into society it required little effort upon his part for him to become a prime favorite with the fair sex. Matrons blessed with daughters to be married off, overwhelmed

him with agreeable little attentions; for, in addition to his other attractions, he was the happy possessor of an income of forty thousand francs a year in his own right, and the sole heir of an eccentric uncle, many times a millionaire —on the whole, a young man occupying a most enviable position. In spite of all, however, Guy had never married; he had contented himself with amiably applauding the sonatas which the young women executed for his benefit, and he courteously went through his duties in the cotillion; but his conversation with his partners, during the pauses in the dance, was limited to some such observation as, "This room is very warm," an aphorism from which it was impossible to deduct the slightest matrimonial hope. It was not that he was wanting in conversational powers; he would have experienced no difficulty in finding something less commonplace to say if he had not feared to become entangled in those strong meshes, as dangerous as is the web of the spider to the unsuspecting fly, which are stretched in society about marriageable virgins possessed of meager dowries.

When he perceived that he was received with a suspicious warmth in any particular

house, he ceased to go there, or he set out on a long journey, and on his return experienced the satisfaction of finding himself completely forgotten. You may imagine, perhaps, that, like many young men of the present day, Guy found in the ranks of the *demi-monde* transient, morganatic unions, which took the place, to a certain extent, of a marriage blessed by church and state; but such an idea would be very far from the actual truth. Without being more strict than was in keeping with his years, Malivert was not attracted by those painted beauties, with banged hair and extravagant costumes. It was a pure matter of taste and temperament. Like every one else, he had met with a certain success in affairs of gallantry. Two or three women, who imagined themselves misunderstood by their husbands, and who were more or less separated from their liege lords in consequence, had proclaimed him their ideal, winning from him, however, no other response than "You are very kind;" for Malivert was courteous to a fault, and preferred not to tell them that they were not at all *his* ideal. In addition to this, a little ballet-girl of the Délassements Comiques, to whom he had given

a few gold pieces and a velvet wrap, pretended that she had been forsaken, and attempted to asphyxiate herself in his honor; but, in spite of these fine adventures, Guy de Malivert, at the solemn age of twenty-nine, frankly confessed to himself that he was approaching the limits of real youth and was still ignorant of love—at least, of such love as is depicted in poem, drama, and romance, or even such as his comrades painted when in a confidential or bragging mood. He found ample consolation for this misfortune, however, in reflecting upon the worries, troubles, and calamities that usually follow in the train of the tender passion, and he possessed his soul in patience until the day should come when would appear the fateful being who was destined to bind him in her chains.

Yet, as the world often disposes of us at its own sweet will and fancy, it had been decided, in those circles where Guy was most intimate, that he was in love with a certain Madame d'Ymbercourt, a young widow, at whose house he was on terms of more or less intimacy. Madame d'Ymbercourt's property joined that of Guy; she was in possession of an income of

sixty thousand francs a year, and was only twenty-two years old. She had paid all due observances to the memory of Monsieur d'Ymbercourt—a man much older than herself—and her position permitted her, if she so desired, to marry a young and handsome man of a rank and fortune equal to her own. Society had already mated her with Guy de Malivert, thinking that their house would be a pleasant one to go to—a neutral ground on which to meet. Madame d'Ymbercourt tacitly accepted this match, and regarded herself as Guy's future wife. The young man, however, was in no haste to declare himself; on the contrary, at times he even debated the question whether he should not cease his visits to the house of the pretty widow, who annoyed him somewhat by her premature demands upon his exclusive attention.

This very evening, indeed, Guy had promised to go to a small gathering at Madame d' Ymbercourt's; but after dinner a disinclination to make any exertion had taken possession of him, and he felt so comfortable at home that he had recoiled from the idea of dressing and venturing forth on a night when the thermome-

ter was several degrees below zero, in spite of the fact that he would be wrapped in furs and that his carriage was provided with foot-warmers. As an excuse, he told himself that his horse was not shod for frosty weather, and might have a bad fall on the glazed surface of the snow. Besides, he did not care to leave exposed to the piercing wind for two or three hours an animal for which he had paid Cremieux, the famous horse-dealer in the Champs-Élysées, the sum of five thousand francs. From these reflections of Guy, the deduction can easily be drawn that the young man was not over head and ears in love, and that in all probability Madame d'Ymbercourt would have to wait a long time for the ceremony which would permit her to bear another name.

As Malivert—rendered drowsy by the soft, warm atmosphere of the room, where floated in bluish, fragrant clouds the smoke of two or three cabañas, the ashes of which filled a little Chinese cup of antique bronze placed beside him upon the table that supported the lamp—was beginning to feel upon his eyelids the gentle fall of the golden dust of the sandman, the door of the room was cautiously opened,

and a domestic appeared, bearing upon a silver salver a small, perfumed note, sealed with a device doubtless familiar to Guy, for as he caught sight of it his features contracted in a frown. The powerful scent of the paper seemed also to disagreeably impress him. The note was from Madame d'Ymbercourt, to remind him of his promise to come and take a cup of tea with her.

"Confound her!" he exclaimed, with scant gallantry, "and her scented notes, which give one a headache! Great pleasure it will give me to go to the other side of the city to drink a cup of warm water flavored with a few leaves tainted with Prussian blue and verdigris, when I have in that lacquered box Caravan tea—real tea, bearing still the stamp of the custom-house of Kiatka, the last Russian post on the frontiers of China! No; decidedly, I will not go!"

Nevertheless, a certain remnant of courtesy made him change his mind, and he told his valet to bring him his evening clothes; but when he saw the legs of the trousers hanging piteously over the back of a chair, the shirt stiff and white as a surface of porcelain; the

black coat with its limp arms, the glazed, shining shoes, and the gloves stretched out and looking like hands which had been run through a wringing-machine, his heart failed him again, and he flung himself back in his comfortable chair.

"I will stay at home. Jack, take the covers off my bed!"

We have said before that Guy was a well-bred fellow, and, moreover, he had a kind heart; so, troubled by a slight twinge of remorse, he hesitated on the threshold of his bedroom, which seemed to extend to him a smiling welcome, and reflected that the most ordinary courtesy exacted at least a word of excuse to Madame d'Ymbercourt—the pretext of a headache, an important business matter, some accident just as he was about to leave the house, or anything which might be accepted as a sufficient reason for his failure to keep his engagement. Now, Malivert, although capable—without being a professional man of letters—of writing an article or a novelette for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, abhorred letter-writing of every description, and shrank especially from those purely social

notes which women scribble by the dozens upon the edge of their dressing-table, while Clotilde or Rose is brushing their hair. He would far rather have composed a sonnet with rare and difficult rhymes. His sterility in correspondence was complete, and to avoid writing an answer of two or three lines he would go in person from one end of the city to the other. Terror-stricken at the idea of a note of excuse, the desperate idea of going to Madame d' Ymbercourt's returned to him. He approached the window, parted the draperies, and through the frosted panes looked out at the whirl of the snow-flakes dancing against the black background of the night. He thought of Grymalkin shaking off the fluffy masses of snow which clung to his glistening harness; he experienced in imagination the disagreeable passage from the coupé to the vestibule, the draughts of the staircase which no artificial warmth could neutralize; he pictured in his mind Madame d'Ymbercourt standing before the fire-place in full dress, the neck of her gown cut so low as to recall that character in one of Charles Dickens' novels who is always referred to as "The Bosom," and whose white expanse of uncov-

ered neck serves as a sort of prospectus upon which to display the opulence of her banker husband; he saw her superb teeth displayed in a set, expressionless smile; her perfectly arched eyebrows, which gave one the impression, false though it was, that they were traced with India ink; her magnificent eyes; her nose, regular enough to serve as a model in a drawing-book; her figure, which all dressmakers pronounced faultless; and her arms, as rounded as if they had been turned in a machine, and loaded with heavy bracelets. The memory of all these charms, which the world destined for him by marrying him to the young widow, cast him into a state of dejection so profound that he turned to his desk, resolved, frightful task as it was, to write a dozen lines rather than go and take tea with this charming woman.

He drew toward him a sheet of cream-laid paper, stamped with a G and an M fancifully interwoven, dipped in the ink a fine steel pen in a holder fashioned from the quill of a porcupine, and wrote—quite low down the page, in order to diminish as much as possible the blank space which would have to be filled up—the triumphant word, "Madame." There he

paused, and rested his cheek in the palm of his hand, his muse refusing him any further inspiration. For several minutes he remained thus in a motionless attitude, his hand in position to write, the fingers grasping the pen, and his brain involuntarily occupied with ideas quite at variance with the subject of his letter. As if, while waiting for the words and sentences which did not come, he had become physically wearied, his hand suddenly began to move impatiently, and seemed to be seized with a nervous desire to enter upon its task. The thumb and forefinger were extended and drawn back as in the act of forming letters, and finally Guy was greatly astonished to find that, without being in the least aware of it, he had written nine or ten lines, which he read over, and found the sense to be about as follows:

"You are beautiful enough and have sufficient adorers at your feet to permit a man to say to you without offense that he does not love you. It is simply an evidence of bad taste on the part of the one making that avowal. What advantage is there in continuing relations which would end in the union of two beings so little suited to one another, binding them

together in an unhappiness that would have no end? Pardon me; I am going away, and you will have no difficulty in forgetting me."

Malivert read these words over twice, and then, bringing his hand down heavily on the table, he exclaimed: "Am I mad or dreaming? That is a strange letter to have written! It is like those lithographs of Gavarni where you see side by side the words written and the words thought—only in this case the written words are identical with the thought. My hand refused to lend itself to the pretty little social lie I intended to indite, and, contrary to usual custom, the real idea is expressed in the letter."

He took up the note and examined it attentively; it seemed to him that the character of the handwriting was far from being the same that it was his habit to employ.

"That is a writing," he thought, "which would most certainly be contested by experts if my epistolary efforts were worth that trouble. How under the sun has this strange transformation been accomplished? I have smoked no opium, eaten no hasheesh, and the two or three glasses of Burgundy I drank at

dinner can not have affected my head. My brain is too strong for that. What will become of me if the truth continues to flow from my pen, without my will or consciousness? It was fortunate for me that I was not very sure of my orthography this evening, and so read over my note. What an effect those pleasant and altogether too truthful lines would have produced, and how indignant and amazed Madame d'Ymbercourt would have been at reading them! Perhaps it would have been the best thing that could happen if the letter had gone just as it is; I should have been branded as a monster, a tattooed savage, unfit ever to wear a dress-coat and a white cravat; but, at all events, this wearisome bondage would have been broken forever. If I were in the slightest degree superstitious, I should see in this extraordinary letter a warning from Heaven instead of a peculiar state of abstraction on my part."

After a moment's further reflection, Guy formed a sudden resolution. "I will go to Madame d'Ymbercourt's, for I am incapable of rewriting that letter." He dressed with feverish haste, and prepared to depart; but, as he was about to open the door, he thought he

heard a sigh—a sigh so soft, so light, so ethereal, that only in the profound silence of the night could the ear have caught it.

Malivert paused upon the threshold of the study. The sigh impressed him with that indefinable feeling of awe that the supernatural always causes in the bravest hearts. There was nothing terrifying in that vague, inarticulate, plaintive note, and yet Guy felt more troubled than he would have cared to confess, even to himself.

"Bah! it was the cat breathing heavily in her sleep," he said, half aloud; and, taking from the hands of his valet a heavy fur coat, he enveloped himself in it with a skill that showed frequent visits to Russia, descended the stairs in a bad enough humor, and entered his carriage, which was waiting for him before the door.

## II.

ENSCONCED in a corner of his coupé, with his feet upon the can of hot water and his furs wrapped tightly about him, Malivert regarded aimlessly the long perspectives of the streets starred here and there with points of brilliancy, and the odd, shifting effects of light and shade produced upon the slightly misted pane by a sudden flash from some gas-illumined shop still open at this late hour.

The carriage soon crossed the Pont de la Concorde, beneath which flowed the heavy water of the Seine, reflecting in its dark bosom the thousand gas-jets along the banks. As he rolled steadily on, Malivert found it impossible to prevent his thoughts reverting to the mysterious sigh, which he had heard, or thought he had heard, as he was leaving his apartments. He brought up all those natural reasons which sceptics adduce to explain the inexplicable. It must, doubtless, have been the wind in the chimney or in the corridor; some sound from outside modified by the echo; the dull vibration of one

of the piano strings shaken by the passing of a heavy vehicle; or even, as he had at first imagined, the breathing of his Angora dreaming before the fire. Nothing was more probable, nothing could be more in accordance with common sense; and yet, while recognizing how logical these explanations were, in his innermost heart Malivert was far from being satisfied by them. A secret instinct told him that the sigh was due to none of the causes to which his philosophical prudence attributed it; he felt that the gentle, plaintive murmur came from a soul, and was not a vague sound produced by matter. There had been a note of sorrow in it; whence could it have proceeded? Guy thought of it with that sort of perplexed anxiety which the strongest natures feel when brought, without their own volition, face to face with the unknown. There was no one in the room—no one except Jack, a creature decidedly lacking in sentiment—and the sigh, delicately modulated, harmonious, touching, fainter than the soft whispering of a summer breeze amidst the leaves of an aspen, was indubitably *feminine;* it was impossible to deny it that characteristic.

There was another circumstance which puzzled Malivert, and that was the letter which was written, so to speak, all by itself, as if a will other than his own had guided his fingers. The idea that he had been attacked by a fit of absent-mindedness, with which he had at first attempted to explain the occurrence, was far from satisfactory. The sentiments of the heart are subjected to the control of the mind before being transferred to paper, and, besides, they do not arrange themselves into words and sentences while the brain is dreaming of something else. Some influence, which he was incapable of defining, must have taken possession of him while he was buried in reflection, and acted in his stead; for the more he thought about it, the more convinced he became that he had not been asleep for a single moment. All evening he had been lazy and drowsy, overcome by the torpor caused by the delicious comfort of his surroundings; but when he started to write the letter, he was thoroughly wide-awake. The annoying alternative of going to Madame d'Ymbercourt's or of writing a note of excuse had irritated and aroused him; those marks of the pen which summed up his secret thoughts,

in a truer and clearer manner than he would as yet confess, were due to an intervention which must be qualified by the word supernatural until scientific analysis has explained it or given it another title.

While Guy de Malivert was revolving these questions in his head, the carriage rolled through the streets, which the cold and snow rendered more deserted than was ordinarily the case in these wealthy and fashionable quarters, where late hours are the rule with everybody. The Place de la Concorde, the Rue de Rivoli, the Place Vendôme were rapidly left behind, and the coupé, following the boulevard, turned the corner of the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, where Madame d'Ymbercourt lived.

As he entered the court-yard, Guy experienced a disagreeable sensation; two lines of carriages, with the coachmen shrouded in furs, filled the sanded space in the center, and the impatient horses, champing their bits, threw off flecks of foam to mingle with the snowflakes upon the ground.

"This is what she calls a quiet evening—a cup of tea by the fireside! she never has anything

else! All Paris will be here; and I did not put on a white cravat!" growled Malivert. "It would have been much better if I had gone to bed, but I tried to be a diplomat like Talleyrand: I would not follow my first impulse because it seemed a good one."

He mounted the staircase with a lagging step, and, after ridding himself of his coat, he made his way to the salon. A footman opened the doors for him with a sort of obsequious and knowing deference, as if recognizing that something more than ordinary courtesy was due the man who would soon be the master of the house, and in whose service he desired to remain.

"What," muttered Guy de Malivert beneath his breath, as he noticed this servility, more accentuated than common, "has it come to such a pass that even servants dispose of my person and marry me off-hand to Madame d'Ymbercourt? The bans are not published yet, however."

As Madame d'Ymbercourt saw Guy advancing toward her with bowed head and crouched back, which is the modern form of salutation, she uttered a little exclamation of satisfaction,

which was quickly repressed, however, in an effort to assume an air of injured innocence. But her lips were too accustomed to display the two rows of perfect teeth, and even a little of the pink gums, in a perpetual smile, to easily form the pout she demanded of them, and the lady, perceiving by a furtive glance in the mirror that the desired expression was not a success, determined to change her rôle to that of an indulgent woman, who knows that too much gallantry must not be exacted of men in these degenerate days.

"How late you are, Monsieur Guy!" she said, extending to him a little hand so tightly gloved that it seemed to the touch as if carved of wood. "I suppose you have been loitering at your miserable club, smoking and playing cards. You are sufficiently punished, however, for you have missed hearing the great German pianist, Kreisler, play Liszt's chromatic galop, and that charming Countess Salvarosa sing the romance from Saul as it has never been sung since the days of Malibran."

Guy, in a few polite words, expressed his regret, which, to tell the truth, was anything but keen, to miss the galop of the virtuoso

and the aria of the society woman; and as he felt a little embarrassed at having about his neck, among all these correctly dressed people, a band of black silk instead of one of white lawn, he attempted to withdraw and gain some corner less flooded with light, where he could hide more easily in the relative obscurity this involuntary solecism in his dress. He had much difficulty in putting this resolution into execution, however, for Madame d'Ymbercourt continually drew him back to the circle of which she was the center, by a glance or some word demanding a response, which Guy made as brief as possible; but at last he succeeded in reaching a door-way which led from the large salon to a smaller one, arranged as a conservatory and filled with trellises covered with camellias.

Madame d'Ymbercourt's salon was white and gold; the walls were hung with crimson India damask; the chairs and sofas were large, comfortable, and well upholstered; the gilded chandeliers held candles set in a foliage of rock crystal; lamps, vases, and a large, highly decorated clock adorned the white marble mantelpiece. A handsome carpet, as thick as the turf

of an English lawn, was spread under foot. Rich, heavy curtains screened the windows, and in a panel, magnificently framed, smiled, even more than the original, a portrait of the Countess painted by Winterhalter.

There was nothing in this salon, furnished with beautiful and expensive things, which could not be procured by anyone with a purse long enough to have no fear of heavy bills from the decorator and upholsterer. Its richness was in good taste enough, but it was commonplace—it lacked the stamp of individuality. There was nothing to show the character of the owner, and if the mistress of the house had been absent, one might have thought oneself in the salon of a banker, a lawyer, or some American bird of passage. All personality was conspicuously wanting. Guy, therefore, who was endowed with an artistic temperament, found all this luxury frightfully ordinary, and as distasteful as possible. It was, however, excellently suited to Madame d'Ymbercourt, whose beauty was somewhat vulgarly perfect.

In the middle of the room, upon a circular divan, surmounted by a large Chinese vase in

which bloomed a rare exotic plant (the very name of which was unknown to Madame d'Ymbercourt, and which had been placed there by her gardener), were seated, amidst billows of gauze, tulle, lace, satin, and velvet, women, for the most part young and handsome, whose toilettes, in their extravagant caprice, demonstrated that they had been evolved from the brain of the inexhaustible and costly Worth. In their brown, yellow, red, and even powdered tresses, of such opulence as to lead even the least malevolent person to suppose that, contrary to Monsieur Planard's romance, art must have been called in to adorn nature, gleamed diamonds, waved plumes, flourished leaves sparkling with dew-drops, blossomed real or chimerical flowers, rattled strings of sequins, intersected rows of pearls, glittered arrows, daggers, and fanciful pins, shone garnishments of beetles' wings, twisted bands of gold, trembled at the end of their spiral settings stars of precious stones, and, in general, all that can adorn the head of a fashionable woman, without counting the grapes, currants, and brilliantly colored berries which Pomona might offer to Flora to complete her evening coiffure, if it is

permitted to an author who writes in this year of grace to make use of mythological similes.

Leaning against the jamb of the door, Guy contemplated the smooth, satin-like shoulders dusted with rice-powder, the coquettish little curls straying over the nape of the neck, and the white bosoms, at times a little too freely displayed by the slipping down of the shoulder-strap which did duty for a sleeve. This little misfortune, however, is one to which a woman who is sure of her charms becomes easily resigned. The movement to raise the sleeve is a most graceful one, and gives an opportunity for pretty positions of the hand as it adjusts the fit of the gown. Our hero abandoned himself to this interesting study, which he preferred to tiresome conversation, and which, indeed, he declared was the only benefit to be derived from a ball or reception. With a nonchalant eye he glanced over these living books of beauty—these animated keepsakes which society strews through its salons as it heaps its tables with stereoscopes, albums, and magazines for the use of timid and bashful people. He enjoyed this pastime with all the more security, because, in consequence of the ex-

tended rumors of his approaching marriage to Madame d'Ymbercourt, he was no longer obliged to keep watch of his glances, which had formerly been so jealously scrutinized by mothers who were anxious to obtain a fine establishment for their daughters. No one now expected anything of him. He had ceased to be an object to be envied and struggled for; his place in life was settled, and, although more than one woman secretly believed that he might have made a better choice, the affair was accepted in a becoming spirit. He could, without fear of the consequences, even address to any young girl he pleased two or three consecutive remarks—was he not the future husband of Madame d'Ymbercourt?

In the same door-way with Monsieur Guy de Malivert stood a young man whom he often met at the club, and whose intelligence and wit, tinged as they were with a certain foreign flavor of northern lands, had made a most favorable impression upon him. This young man was the Baron de Féroë, a Swede, a compatriot of Swedenborg, like him hanging over the abyss of mysticism, and as much occupied with the other world as with this. His appearance

was peculiar. His fair hair, almost as straight as an Indian's, seemed even lighter in color than his skin, and his mustache was of such a pale-gold hue that it might almost be described as silver. His eyes, of a bluish-gray, wore an expression hard to define, and although they were usually half veiled by long, whitish lashes, they at times shot forth a piercing, brilliant glance which seemed to penetrate beyond the range of human vision. The Baron de Féroë, however, was too thorough a gentleman to affect the slightest eccentricity; his manners were correct and cold, and he never assumed, for the benefit of a gaping public, the airs and graces of a visionary. On this particular evening, as, after Madame d'Ymbercourt's tea, he was due at a ball to be given at the Austrian Embassy, he was in full dress, and against the black surface of his coat gleamed, suspended from a slender gold chain, the crosses of The Elephant and of Dannebrog, a Prussian decoration, the Order of Saint Alexander Newsky, and other decorations of the courts of the North, which proclaimed his services in the ranks of diplomacy.

Baron de Féroë was really a very singular

man; but his peculiarities did not strike one at first, his whole personality was so enveloped and disguised in an outward garb of diplomatic phlegm. He was seen everywhere in society—at balls, official receptions, the clubs, and the opera; but, while apparently in every respect a man of the world, his private life was wrapped in mystery. He had no intimate friends or companions. In his house, which was kept in the most beautiful order, no visitor was ever allowed to pass the first reception-room; the door which led to the other apartments was, under no circumstances, opened to anyone. Like the Turks, he admitted the outer world to one room alone, a room which was evidently used for no other purpose, for after the departure of his visitors he at once retreated to the privacy beyond. What his occupations were, no one knew. He occasionally retired from the world for long periods, and those who noticed his disappearance attributed it to some secret mission, or to a journey to Sweden, where his family lived; but, during these absences, anyone who chanced to pass at a late hour through the unfrequented street where the Baron lived, might have seen his windows lighted, and some-

times have discovered the gentleman himself leaning on the balcony and lost in absorbed contemplation of the stars. But no one had any interest in spying upon the Baron de Féroë. He rendered to the world what was strictly its due, and the world asked nothing more of him. With women, his perfect courtesy never passed certain limits, even when without risk he might have ventured a little further. In spite of his coldness, he was not unpopular. The pure, classic outlines of his features recalled Thorwaldsen's Græco-Scandinavian statues. "He is a frozen Apollo," said of him the beautiful Countess de C——, who, if report is to be believed, had tried to penetrate his icy exterior.

The Baron, following Malivert's example, had his eyes fixed upon the exquisite contour of a neck of snowy whiteness. "A very pretty woman," he remarked to Guy, with a meaning glance. "What a pity it is that she has no soul! Whoever falls in love with her will meet the same fate as the student Nathaniel, in Hoffman's story, The Sand Man; he will run the risk of dancing with a manikin in his arms, and that is a dance of death for a man of heart."

"Have no fear, my dear Baron," responded Guy, laughing; "I have no desire to fall in love with the being to whom those beautiful shoulders belong, although beautiful shoulders in themselves are not to be disdained. Just at present, I acknowledge, to my shame, I do not feel a scintillation of the tender passion for any woman whatever."

"What! not even for Madame d'Ymbercourt, whom report says you are going to marry?" retorted Baron de Féroë, with an air of mingled irony and incredulity.

"There are in this world," replied Malivert, borrowing from Molière, "people who would marry the Grand Turk to the Republic of Venice; but I certainly hope to remain a bachelor."

"That is a wise resolution," said the Baron, with a sudden change of both voice and manner from a friendly familiarity to a mysterious solemnity; "do not pledge yourself to any terrestrial bond. Remain free for the love which may perhaps descend upon you. Spirits are watching you, and you might perhaps suffer eternal remorse in the other world for a fault committed in this."

As the young Swedish Baron spoke these strange words, his steel-blue eyes gleamed and glowed with such a brilliant flame that Guy almost fancied he could feel the fiery rays penetrate his breast.

So much had happened to him this evening that was odd and unaccountable, that he received his companion's mysterious advice in a more serious mood than he would have done a day earlier. He turned upon the Swede a look of questioning astonishment, as if to beg him to speak more clearly; but Monsieur de Féroë glanced at his watch, and exclaiming, "I shall be late at the Embassy!" grasped Malivert's hand with a strong, swift pressure, and, without rumpling a gown, without stepping upon a train, without becoming entangled in lace or ribbon, opened a passage for himself through the crowd with a skill and grace which showed his familiarity with society.

"Well, Guy! are you not coming to take a cup of tea?" sounded the voice of Madame d'Ymbercourt, who had at last discovered her reputed adorer leaning dreamily against the door of the little salon; and Malivert was obliged to follow the mistress of the house to

the table where smoked the hot beverage in a silver urn, surrounded by costly china cups.

The real was endeavoring to recapture its prey from the ideal.

## III.

THE extraordinary words of the Baron de Féroë, and the almost abrupt disappearance of the young diplomat immediately after he had uttered them, furnished Guy with ample food for thought as he returned to the Fauborg Saint-Germain, borne along at a rapid gait by Grymalkin, who was doubtless longing to be sheltered from the stinging blast in his warm and comfortable box-stall, although, like the animal of good blood that he was, he did not need this incentive to spur him on to his best endeavors.

"What under the sun did he mean by his solemn enigmas, uttered in the tone of an expounder of mysteries?" thought Guy, as, with the aid of Jack, he divested himself of his garments and prepared for bed. "The Baron is certainly anything but romantic; he is calm, polished, and self-possessed, and his manners, for all their exquisite and precise courtesy, are so cold that the wind of

the North Pole would appear warm in comparison. That he was making game of me is an idea not to be entertained for a moment. No one would dare attempt such a liberty with Guy de Malivert, even were he as fearless a man as the Swede with the white lashes; and, besides, what would be the motive of such a proceeding? At all events, he could not have enjoyed his joke, for he hastened away as if determined to say no more. Bah! I will think no more of this trash; I shall see the Baron to-morrow at the club, and he will doubtless be more explicit. I will go to bed now, and try to sleep, whether the spirits are watching me or not."

And, in fact, Guy did go to bed; but sleep refused to rest upon his eyelids as he had hoped, although he called to his aid the most soporific books, which he read with the most intense, mechanical attention. In spite of himself, he listened to the faint, almost imperceptible, sounds which can always be heard, even in what seems to be the most complete silence. The peculiar click of the clock just before sounding the hours and the half-hours, the sputtering of sparks under the ashes, the cracking of the wood-work contracted by

the heat, the gurgle of the oil falling in the lamp, the occasional puff of air whistling under the door in spite of the weather-strips, the unexpected sliding of a newspaper from his bed to the floor, made him start, so overwrought were his nerves, as the sudden explosion of a fire-arm might have done at any other time. His hearing was sharpened to such a point that he could hear the pulsations of his arteries and the beating of his heart almost up to his throat. But, among all these confused murmurs, he could distinguish nothing that resembled a sigh.

His eyes, which he closed from time to time, in the hope of wooing sleep, soon reopened, and explored the corners of the chamber with a curiosity which was not devoid of apprehension. He keenly desired to discover something, and yet he dreaded having his longing gratified. At times his dilated pupils fancied they perceived vague, indistinct forms in the recesses where the light of the lamp, softened by a green shade, did not fully penetrate; the folds of the curtains assumed the aspect of feminine garments, and seemed to sway as if propelled by the movement of a body, but this was purely

the effect of an illusive imagination; jagged flashes, luminous points, kaleidoscopic spots of changing designs, butterflies, undulating, pulsating lines, danced, swarmed, increased, and diminished beneath his weary gaze, without his being able to distinguish anything tangible.

More troubled than he would have cared to acknowledge, and feeling, although he neither heard nor saw anything, the presence of something weird in his chamber, he rose, threw about him a camel's-hair robe which he had brought from Cairo, cast two or three logs upon the andirons, and sat down before the fireplace in a big arm-chair, more comfortable for a man afflicted with insomnia than a bed inartistically made by a feeble old woman. All at once he perceived upon the carpet, near the arm-chair, a crumpled piece of paper, which he picked up, and found to be the note that he had written to Madame d'Ymbercourt, under that extraordinary impulse, which he had not yet succeeded in satisfactorily explaining. He unfolded it, smoothed out the creases, and noticed, after careful scrutiny, that the character of the handwriting differed somewhat from his own. One would have said that an

impatient hand which could not confine itself to a fac-simile, an exact following of the model, had mingled with the letters of the original, strokes and peculiarities of its own chirography. There was a certain feminine delicacy in the whole appearance of the lines traced. While noting these details, Guy thought of Edgar Poe's Gold Bug, and the marvelous sagacity with which William Legrand deciphered the cryptogram in which Captain Kidd had designated the precise spot where his treasures lay buried. He would have been well content to possess that profound intuition which made such bold and exact guesses, supplied the missing places, and joined together again the broken links of the chain. But in this case, Legrand himself, even with the aid of Auguste Dupin of the Stolen Letter and The Murder in the Rue Morgue, could not by human means have divined the secret power which had guided Malivert's hand.

However, Guy finally fell into that heavy, dreamless sleep which succeeds a night of insomnia and heralds the approach of dawn. When Jack entered to light the fire and assist his master with his toilet, he awoke with a

chilly, uncomfortable feeling; he yawned, stretched, shook himself, splashed about in the cold water of his bath, and refreshed by his ablutions, soon regained complete possession of his senses. Jack drew aside the curtains and threw open the blinds; and "gray-eyed morn," as Shakspere says, descending, not over the summits of green hills, but over the tops of white roofs, glided into the apartment and, by lending an air of reality to everything, put to flight all nocturnal chimeras. Nothing is so reassuring as sunlight, even when it proceeds from a pale winter's sun, like that which penetrated through the feathery foliage which the Frost King had engraved upon the window-panes.

Having recovered his usual serenity of mind, Malivert was astonished at the uneasy night he had passed, and said to himself: "I did not know I was so nervous." Then he tore open the wrapper of the morning's papers, glanced at the feuilletons, read the telegraphic news, picked up the volume of Evangeline which he had cast aside the previous evening, smoked a cigar, and these various occupations having brought him to eleven o'clock, he dressed him-

self, and concluded, for the sake of the exercise, to go on foot to the Café Bignon for breakfast. The frost had hardened the snow of the previous night, and as he crossed the gardens of the Tuileries, he admired the mythological statues all powdered with white, and the magnificent chestnut-trees draped in mantles of sparkling silver. He made an excellent breakfast, like a man who wishes to repair the ravages caused by late hours, and chatted gaily with his companions, the fine flower of Parisian wit and scepticism, who had adopted as their motto the Greek maxim: Remember to believe in nothing.

However, when their jests became a little too highly flavored, Guy smiled with an air of constraint; for some reason or other, he found it impossible to completely abandon himself to their paradoxes of disbelief and their parade of cynicism. The words of the Baron de Féroë, "Spirits are watching you," returned involuntarily to his mind, and it seemed to him that there was behind him a presence of a mysterious nature. He rose, waved his hand in farewell to his friends, and took a few turns up and down that boulevard where passes in a day

more intelligence than is to be found in a year throughout all the rest of the globe; but as he found it to-day somewhat deserted on account of the cold, he turned mechanically the corner of the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, and in a few moments found himself before the house of Madame d'Ymbercourt. As he was about to press the electric button, he fancied that he felt a soft breath upon his cheek, and that he heard, murmured very low but very distinctly, these words: "Do not enter." He turned quickly, but there was no one in sight.

"Am I going mad?" he muttered. "I have hallucinations in broad daylight now. Shall I obey that odd injunction, or not?"

But, with the quick movement he had made in turning, his finger placed upon the button had rung the bell; the door had opened, and the concierge, in front of his lodge, was regarding Malivert as he stood hesitating upon the threshold. He was obliged to enter, although he had little desire to do so after the supernatural incident which had happened; and he was welcomed by Madame d'Ymbercourt in the little yellow and blue salon where she received morning visitors, and the coloring of which was

particularly displeasing to Guy. "Is not yellow becoming to brunettes?" had been the Countess' answer, when he had ventured to suggest that she should change the odious decoration.

Madame d'Ymbercourt was arrayed in a gown of black satin, with a vest of brilliant color, and with more cords, embroidery, jet, and passementerie than ever a *maja* going to a *feria* or a bull-fight wore upon her basquine. The Countess, woman of the world that she was, made the mistake of wearing those impossible costumes which are never seen except upon the figures with pink cheeks and mouths like a Cupid's bow to be found in the plates of a fashion magazine.

To-day, Madame d'Ymbercourt's face wore an unusual expression of gravity; a shade of annoyance rested upon her brow, which was ordinarily so serene, and the corners of her mouth were slightly drawn down. One of her intimate friends, who had just left her, had asked her, with the feigned kindliness women always display on such occasions, if the date of her marriage to Guy had been fixed; the Countess had blushed, faltered, and answered

vaguely that it would take place soon; for Guy, whom everybody looked upon as her promised husband, had never asked her hand, nor even made a formal declaration of his love, which Madame d'Ymbercourt attributed to a respectful timidity, and also, perhaps, to that feeling of hesitation which every young man experiences on the eve of abandoning his free bachelor's life. But she firmly believed that he would declare himself one day or another, and she was so certain of becoming his wife that she had arranged in her head the alterations which the presence of a husband would demand. "This shall be Guy's bed room, this his study, and this his smoking-room," she had said to herself more than once as she walked through certain rooms of her house.

Although he did not care particularly for the lady, Guy was compelled to acknowledge that she was very handsome, that she enjoyed a spotless reputation, and that she was possessed of a considerable fortune. Like all men whose hearts are empty, he had allowed himself to become intimate at the house where he met with a warmer reception than at any other. If he absented himself for a few days,

a note, amiably reproaching him for his neglect, would force him to reappear.

Besides, why should he not go there? Madame d'Ymbercourt moved in excellent society, and on certain days he was sure of meeting in her salon many of his friends, whom it would have been less convenient to seek elsewhere in the hurly-burly of Parisian life.

"You are looking a trifle pale," said Malivert to the Countess. "Was your rest disturbed by the imps of green tea?"

"Oh, no; I took so much cream with it that it lost all its strength. And then, I am the Mithridates of tea; it never affects me. It is not that. I am annoyed."

"Does my presence disturb any of your plans? If so, I will retire, and it shall be as if I had not found you in and had left my card with the concierge."

"Your presence never disturbs me, and you know that I am always glad to see you," returned the Countess. "I ought not to say it to you, perhaps, but your visits seem to me rare enough, although they appear too frequent to others."

"Are you not your own mistress, with no

disagreeable relatives, no tiresome brother, no doting uncle, nor watchful aunt working at her embroidery in the embrasure of a window? Kind nature has freed you from those unpleasant beings who are too often found clustered about a pretty woman. You can receive whom you please, for you are answerable to no one."

"That is true," replied Madame d'Ymbercourt; "I am answerable to no one in particular, but I am answerable to everyone in general. A woman is never completely emancipated, even if she be a widow and to all appearances mistress of her actions. A whole police force of disinterested spies surround her and busy themselves with her affairs. Therefore, my dear Guy, you are compromising me."

"I compromising you!" exclaimed Malivert, with a genuine astonishment which showed a modesty rare enough in a young and handsome man, who had his coats built at Renard's and his trousers cut in England. "Why I, rather than d'Aversac, Beaumont, Yanowski, or Féroë, who are very devoted in their attentions to you?"

"I scarcely know how to tell you," answered

the Countess. "Perhaps you are dangerous without being aware of it, or everybody has credited you with a power of which you are ignorant. No one has ever mentioned the name of any of these gentlemen you speak of in connection with mine; it is deemed quite natural that they should come to my Wednesdays, call on me from five to six o'clock on their return from the Bois, and appear in my box at the Bouffons or the Opera. But these actions, innocent in themselves, have, it seems, when committed by you, a terrible significance."

"And yet I am the most ordinary fellow in the world. Neither figuratively nor in reality do I wear a blue frock-coat like Werther, or a slashed doublet like Don Juan. No one has ever seen me strum a guitar beneath a balcony; I do not drive in a dog-cart with ladies in startling toilettes, nor do I, in society, discuss questions of sentiment with pretty women to display the purity and delicacy of my heart. No one sees me posing against a column, with my hand thrust in my waistcoat, and my eyes fixed, with a sombre, moody expression, upon some pale beauty with long

ringlets, like the Kitty Bell of Alfred de Vigny. Do I wear on my fingers rings containing locks of hair, and upon my breast a sachet filled with Parma violets presented by *her*? Search the innermost recesses of my desk, and you will find no portrait of either blonde or brunette, no packages of letters tied with a blue ribbon, no embroidered slipper, no lace mask, nor any of the knickknacks that compose the secret museum of lovers. Frankly, have I the air of a lady-killer?"

"You are very modest," retorted Madame d'Ymbercourt, "or you are affecting an innocence you do not possess; but everyone, unfortunately, is not of your opinion. There has been much talk about the attentions you have paid me, although, for my part, I see no harm in them."

"Very well," said Malivert, "I will restrict my visits, then, and come here not oftener than once a fortnight or once a month; and then I will take a trip away somewhere. Where shall I go? I know by heart Spain, Italy, Germany, and Russia. I might go to Greece! Not to have seen Athens, the Acropolis, and the Parthenon is a crime. You can go to Marseilles,

and embark for Trieste on an Austrian Lloyd's steamer. You touch at Corfu; you see, in passing, Ithaca, *soli occidenti bene objacentem*, well exposed to the setting sun, to-day as in the time of Homer. You penetrate into the Gulf of Lepanto. You cross the isthmus, and you see what remains of Corinth, where it was not given to everyone to go. You take another boat, and in a few hours you are at the Piræus. Beaumont has told me all about it. He started out a fanatical romanticist; he underwent a transformation while away, and he is now a rigid classicist. He claims that, since the Greeks, humanity has retrograded to a barbaric state, and that our boasted civilization is only a variety of decadence."

Madame d'Ymbercourt was not over-flattered by this geographical dissertation, and she considered that Guy de Malivert was a trifle too anxious to avoid compromising her. This careful regard for her reputation, pushed even to the point of flight, was far from satisfactory to her.

"Why should you go to Greece?" she asked; and then added, with a slight blush and an almost imperceptible trembling of the voice:

"Besides, is there not a much more simple way to silence these gossipers than to desert your friends and risk your life in a country which is by no means safe, if Edmond About's King of the Mountains is to be accepted as a true picture of affairs there?"

Fearing that she had spoken too clearly, the Countess felt a pink tinge, deeper than the first, spread over her face and neck. Her slightly hurried respiration rattled the jet ornaments of her vest. Then taking courage, she raised to Malivert's face eyes which the light of emotion rendered really beautiful. Madame d'Ymbercourt loved Guy, her too silent adorer, as well as a woman of her nature could love anyone. The studied carelessness with which he tied his cravat pleased her; and with that profound feminine logic, the deductions of which the most subtle philosophers have difficulty in following, she had inferred from this that Malivert possessed all the good qualities requisite to make an excellent husband. But—this future husband marched toward the altar with a very slow step, and did not seem at all pressed to light the torches of Hymen.

Guy understood perfectly well the drift of Madame d'Ymbercourt's remarks; but more than ever did he fear to pledge himself by some imprudent speech, and so he answered: "Doubtless, doubtless; but a trip abroad will cut everything short, and on my return we can decide what is best to be done."

At this cold, vague response, the Countess bit her lips in anger. Guy, greatly embarrassed, said no more, and the situation was becoming strained, when the footman caused a fortunate diversion by announcing:

"The Baron de Féroë!"

## IV.

AS the Swedish Baron entered the room, Malivert could not repress a slight manifestation of his satisfaction. Never had a call been more happily timed; and he raised his eyes to Monsieur de Féroë with a look full of gratitude. Had it not been for this opportune interruption, Guy would have found himself in a most embarrassing position; he would have been forced to reply to Madame d'Ymbercourt in a categorical fashion; and nothing was so distressing to him as a brutally sincere explanation. He preferred to hold a matter in abeyance rather than to bind himself by a promise; and even in the most trivial matters he was very loath to engage his word. The look which Madame d'Ymbercourt cast upon the Baron was not charged with the same kindly feeling that Malivert's had exhibited; and if the customs of society had not taught her to dissemble her feelings, one might have read in that rapid glance a mixture of reproach, impatience, and anger. The gentleman's provoking appearance

had put to flight an opportunity which perhaps might not occur again for a long time, and which it had cost Madame d'Ymbercourt considerable humiliation to obtain; for Guy would most assuredly not seek it, but, on the contrary, carefully avoid it. Although, in critical cases, Guy had given proofs of decision and courage, he was wary of anything that might in one way or another narrow or confine his life. His intelligence would have opened to him all careers, but he was unwilling to adopt any, for the profession chosen might lead him astray from the right path. He was not known to have any tie, except the listless habit of going to the Countess' house oftener than elsewhere, which had given rise to the rumor of his projected marriage. Any kind of bond or obligation inspired in him a strong feeling of revolt; and it seemed as if, impelled thereto by a secret instinct, he were endeavoring to preserve his liberty for some future event.

After the exchange of the first ceremonious speeches—the meaningless remarks which serve as a prelude to a conversation, like the running chords one strikes on a piano before beginning the piece of music to be performed—the Baron,

with one of those sudden transitions which lead you, in a couple of phrases, from the fall of Nineveh to the triumph of Gladiateur, began an esthetic and transcendental dissertation upon Wagner's most abstruse operas, The Flying Dutchman, Lohengrin, and Tristam and Iseult. Although Madame d'Ymbercourt played the piano fairly well, and had been one of Herz' most assiduous pupils, she really had no comprehension of music, and especially of music so profound, mysterious, and complicated as that of the mæstro whose Tannhaüser had aroused such violent discussions among her compatriots. While carelessly working on a band of embroidery which she took from a basket placed near the chair in which she usually sat, she replied to the Baron's enthusiastic encomiums with those commonplace objections which are always made to all new music—which were made to Rossini as well as to Wagner—such as lack of rhythm, absence of melody, obscurity, over use of brass, inextricable complication of the orchestration, deafening clamor, and, finally, the absolute impossibility of its execution.

"This is too learned a discussion for me,"

said Guy de Malivert, rising. "I am but a poor ignoramus in musical matters. I like what strikes me as beautiful; I admire Beethoven, and even Verdi, although I know they are wofully out of fashion. So, as I can throw no light upon the subject, but only ejaculate an occasional Ah! or Humph! like the monk chosen as the arbiter in a philosophical discussion by Molière and Chapelle, I will leave you to your argument."

As he finished speaking, Guy advanced to take leave of Madame d'Ymbercourt. The lady laid her hand in his, but at the same time she gave him a look which said "Remain" as plainly as the reserve of a woman of the world permitted, and this look followed him obliquely to the door, with a shade of sadness which would doubtless have touched him if he had perceived it; but his attention was occupied with the imperiously tranquil countenance of the Swede, who seemed to say to him: "Do not expose yourself anew to the danger from which I have rescued you."

Once in the street, he thought, not without a slight shiver, of the supernatural warning he had received before entering Madame d'Ymber-

court's house, and of the appearance of the Baron de Féroë, which coincided in such a remarkable manner with his disobedience to the mysterious voice. The Baron seemed to him to have been sent to his aid by the occult powers whose presence he vaguely felt about him. Guy de Malivert, without being a confirmed sceptic, was not too easily credulous, and no one had ever seen him present at the meetings of clairvoyants, table-turners, and spirit-rappers. He even felt a sort of disgust at those experiments where spirits are supposed to obey the will of mortals; and he had refused to see the celebrated Home when all Paris for a time went wild over him. Up to the previous evening, he had lived the life of a careless, good-humored bachelor, happy enough to be in the world, in which he played his part with no lack of distinction, and not troubling himself whether or no the planet dragged with it, in its orbit about the sun, an atmosphere peopled with invisible, impalpable beings; yet, this afternoon, he could not refrain from acknowledging that the conditions of his life were changed; a new element, without any invitation from him, was seeking an introduction into

his existence, which had hitherto been so peaceful, and from which he had sedulously banished anything of a nature to cause him annoyance or worry. As yet, it was but a trifling matter—a sigh soft as the note of an Æolian harp; a substitution of thoughts in a letter mechanically written; three words breathed in the ear; the encounter with the Swedenborgian Baron, and his solemn and oracular utterances; but it was evident there was some strange influence encircling him—*quærens quem devoret*, as says the Bible in its eternal wisdom.

As he revolved these thoughts in his mind, Malivert reached the Rond-Point of the Champs-Élysées, without having intended to go there rather than anywhere else. His legs had carried him along whither they listed, and he had allowed them to do so. There were very few people abroad. An occasional fanatic, of the kind that insists upon exercising in all weathers, and breaks the ice to bathe in cold water, was returning from the Bois with blue nose and purple cheeks, mounted upon a horse protected by knee-pads. Two or three of these favored Guy with a friendly wave of the hand; and he even received, although he was on foot,

a gracious smile from one of the celebrities of the interloping world, who was displaying, in an open carriage, her magnificent furs, the spoils of a season in Russia.

"I am monarch of all I survey, with none to dispute my sway," thought Malivert. "Cora would never have honored me with such a recognition in summer. But what have I come here for? This is not the season for dining under an awning at the Moulin-Rouge, with a Marco or a Baroness d'Ange, and besides, I am in no mood for folly; however, it is time to think of refreshment below the nose, as Rabelais says. There is the sun setting behind the Arc de l'Etoile."

In fact, the arch of that immense gate-way, which opens upon the sky, formed a frame for a picture of oddly shaped clouds, bordered along their broken edges by a frothy line of light. The evening breeze endowed these floating forms with a slight trembling, which lent them a semblance of life, and, as in those illustrations by Gustave Doré, where the thoughts that haunt the brain of the character represented are reflected in the heavens, showing to the Wandering Jew Christ toiling up Calvary,

and to Don Quixote knights errant struggling with enchanters, so one could easily have found figures and groups in that luminous mass of vapors. Malivert fancied that he could distinguish angels, with great flame-colored wings, poised above a multitude of shadowy, indistinct figures, struggling together, in a confused jumble, upon a bank of black clouds that looked like a gloomy promontory looming up in the midst of a phosphorescent sea. Now and then one of the lower figures would break loose from the crowd and mount upward toward the bright regions, traversing in its flight the red disk of the sun. When it had reached its destination, it would fly for a moment beside one of the angels, and be bathed in radiance. Without doubt, this swirling, changing pageant was an effect of the imagination; and of a picture in the clouds one may say, as Hamlet to Polonius: "Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel? Or like a whale?" and in both cases it is allowable to answer in the affirmative, without being on that account an imbecile sycophant.

The falling shades of night soon extinguished the vaporous phantasmagoria. The jets of gas

in the lamp-posts traced, from the Place de la Concorde to the Arc de l'Etoile, those two lines of fire which produce a magical effect and are the astonishment of foreigners who enter Paris in the evening by that superb avenue; and Guy de Malivert hailed a passing cab, in which he was transported to the Rue de Choiseul, where was situated the club of which he was a member.

Leaving his overcoat with the liveried servants in the antechamber, he turned over the leaves of the register, where were inscribed the names of those who were to dine there that evening, and saw with a feeling of satisfaction that Baron de Féroë's name was amongst them. He wrote his own beneath, and then passed through the billiard-room—where the melancholy marker was waiting until some of the gentlemen should be seized by a fancy to play a game—and many other lofty, spacious rooms, furnished with every comfort that modern ingenuity could devise, and kept at an even temperature by a powerful furnace, which, however, did not prevent enormous logs from blazing away on the monumental andirons of the broad fire-places. There were only about half

a dozen members of the club lounging on the sofas, or absently turning over the papers and magazines arranged in methodical order upon the green baize of the table in the reading-room—an order which was constantly upset, and as constantly reëstablished. Two or three more were writing love-letters or business epistles upon the paper with the club heading.

It was close upon the dinner hour, and the waiting guests were chatting among themselves until the steward should announce that they were served. Guy began to fear that Baron de Féroë would not come; but as he passed into the dining-room, the Swedish gentleman arrived, and took his place beside him. The dinner, served with a magnificent display of glass, china, and silver, was excellent, and each man washed it down in his own fashion—one with Burgundy, another with champagne, and a third with pale ale, according to his fancy or his custom. One or two of rather pronounced English tastes asked for a glass of sherry or port, which tall footmen in knee-breeches ceremoniously brought them, upon a salver engraved with the monogram of the club. Each followed his own caprice, without worry-

ing about his neighbor; for at the club every man is in his own house. Contrary to his usual habit, Guy did but moderate honor to the dinner. Half of the dishes remained untouched, and the bottle of Chateau Margaux at his side was very slowly emptied.

"There is no need," said Baron de Féroë, "to reproach you, as the white angel did Swedenborg one day, with eating too much. Your moderation this evening is most exemplary, and one would think that you hoped to become more spiritual by fasting."

"I do not know," replied Guy, "if a few mouthfuls more or less would disengage mind from matter, and render more diaphanous the veil which separates invisible things from things visible; but the fact is, I have no appetite. Certain circumstances, of which you apparently are not wholly ignorant, have, I confess, a little shaken me, and caused a preoccupation which is not natural to me. In my normal state, I am not absent-minded at table; but to-day, certain thoughts dominate me, in spite of myself. Have you any plans for this evening, Baron? If you have nothing particular to do, I propose that, after the coffee, we

smoke our cigars together in the little music-room, where we shall not be disturbed, unless someone takes a fancy to harass the piano, which is highly improbable. Our musicians are all away this evening at the public rehearsal of the new opera."

The Baron acquiesced most politely to Malivert's proposition, responding graciously that he could not have any better way of passing his time. The two gentlemen therefore established themselves upon the sofa, and at first abandoned themselves to the enjoyment of excellent cigars of *la vuelta de abajo* brand, each thinking, from his point of view, of the strange conversation which was certain to take place between them, and which could not now be long delayed. After an observation or two upon the quality of the tobacco which they were smoking, and the preference that should be accorded to a dark cigar over a light one, the Swedish Baron himself broached the subject which Malivert had been burning to discuss.

"I must, in the first place," he said, "offer you my apologies for the enigmatical advice I ventured to give you the other evening at Madame d'Ymbercourt's; you had not given me

your confidence, and it was somewhat indiscreet in me to intrude upon your thoughts without your permission. I should not have done so, for it is not in my nature to exchange my rôle of man of the world for that of magician, if I had not felt a deep interest in you, and if I had not recognized, by signs perceptible only to adepts, that you had recently received a visit from a spirit, or, at all events, that the invisible world was seeking to communicate with you." Guy declared that the Baron had in no way offended him, and that in such a novel situation he was, on the contrary, very glad to encounter a guide who seemed so learned in supernatural things, and whose reputation for honesty and truth was well known to him.

"You understand," responded the Baron, with a slight inclination of the head in acknowledgment of the other's courteous words, "that it is not easy for me to depart from my usual reserve; but you have perhaps seen enough to believe that what we are able to perceive by our senses is not the sum total of everything; and I do not fear, henceforth, if our conversation touches upon mysterious subjects, that

you will consider me a visionary. The position I occupy places me above the suspicion of charlatanism; and besides, I yield to the inspection of the world my external life only. I do not ask you what has happened to you, but I see that something beyond the sphere of our ordinary existence is interested in you."

"Yes," said Guy; "I feel that something indefinable has come into my life, and I do not think that I shall commit any indiscretion if I relate to you in detail what you have divined with your remarkable intuition." And he proceeded to inform his companion of the events of the last twenty-four hours.

The Swedish Baron, stroking his pale yellow mustache, listened with absorbed attention, but without manifesting the slightest symptom of surprise. When Guy had finished, he was silent for a moment, and appeared to be profoundly reflecting; then, as if in one sentence he was summing up a whole train of thought, he said, suddenly:

"Monsieur de Malivert, has any young girl ever died for love of you?"

"No, indeed," responded Guy, emphatically; "at least, none that I am aware of. I have

not conceit enough to think that I could inspire such a depth of despair. My love affairs, if I can so designate a careless kiss or two, have been very peaceful, and not in the least romantic—vows as lightly broken as made; and, to avoid scenes of recrimination, of which I have a horror, I have always arranged it so that I should be the one betrayed and forsaken; my vanity willingly made that little sacrifice to my comfort. So I do not think that I have left behind me in my life many inconsolable Ariadnes; in the little stories of Parisian mythology, the arrival of Bacchus invariably precedes the departure of Theseus. Besides, I must confess, even if I give you a very poor opinion of my powers of affection, that I have never felt for anyone that intense, exclusive, overpowering passion of which everyone speaks—without having experienced it, perhaps. No being has ever inspired me with the idea of binding myself with an indissoluble tie, or ever made me dream of those projects of two lives in one, and those flights to one of those paradises of azure, light, and perfume which love, they say, knows how to construct, even in a hovel or a garret."

"That is no proof, my dear Guy, that you are incapable of love. There are many varieties of love, and doubtless, in that place where the fate of souls is decided, you have been reserved for a lofty destiny. But there is yet time; the consent of the will can alone give the spirits power over us. You are standing upon the threshold of a boundless, vast, mysterious world, full of illusions and shadows, where contend good and evil influences, which you must learn to distinguish; in that world are to be seen marvels enough to dethrone human reason. No one returns from the depths of this abyss without bearing upon his countenance a pallor never to be effaced; the eye of the flesh can not contemplate with impunity what is reserved for the eye of the soul; these journeys beyond our sphere cause inexpressible weariness of mind and body, and inspire at the same time an overpowering sentiment of nostalgia. Pause before it is too late; do not pass from one world into the other, and do not answer the call which seeks to draw you outside of this material life. Those who conjure up spirits are safe within that circle which they trace around themselves, and which the spirits

can not pass. Let reality represent for you this circle; do not step beyond it, for then your power ceases. You see that, although a high-priest of the cult, I do not seek to proselytize."

"Have I, then, anything to fear," asked Malivert, "from dangerous adventures in this invisible world which surrounds us, and whose existence is revealed to but a small number of privileged persons?"

"No," answered the Baron; "nothing appreciable to the human eye will happen to you, but the peace of your heart and mind may be deeply and eternally disturbed."

"Is the spirit, that does me the honor to be interested in me, of a dangerous nature?"

"It is, on the contrary, a spirit of sympathy, benevolence, and love. I have met it in a place of light and radiance. But a contemplation of the heavens will cause vertigo as well as a look down into an abyss. Remember the story of the shepherd who fell in love with a star."

"And yet," said Malivert, "the words you said to me at Madame d'Ymbercourt's seemed to warn me to beware of any earthly engagement."

"I was forced to speak as I did," replied the Baron; "I felt that I must advise you to remain free, in case you had responded to the manifestations of the spirit; but since you have not done so yet, you are of course still your own master; perhaps the best course you could pursue would be to remain so, and to continue your usual course of life."

"And marry Madame d'Ymbercourt, for example?" suggested Guy, with an ironical smile.

"Why not?" rejoined the Baron. "She is young and handsome, and I have seen in her eyes a look of real sorrow at your persistent coldness. It would not be impossible that a soul should be born within her."

"That is a risk that I do not care to run. I understand your motives, my dear Baron, in attempting to persuade me to continue to lead a commonplace existence. But I have fewer ties than one at first sight would believe. Although I may have arranged my life in the most pleasant and comfortable manner possible, that does not prove any great attachment to the pleasures of the senses. In fact, I am really at heart thoroughly indifferent to the material

things of this life. If I have considered it better form to appear gay and careless, rather than to affect a romantic and ill-bred melancholy, it does not follow that the world as it exists delights and satisfies me. It is true that I do not discuss, before a circle of pretentious women, love, passion, the ideal, but I have kept my heart free from any vulgar idol, spotless and pure for the advent of the unknown god."

While Malivert was speaking with more fire than men of the world are apt to speak in these days, Baron de Féroë's eyes sparkled, and his countenance assumed an expression of enthusiasm which it was his custom to conceal beneath a mask of icy indifference. It afforded him supreme satisfaction to see Guy resist prosaic temptation and abandon the flesh for the spirit.

"Well, my dear Guy," he said, "since your resolve can not be shaken, return home; you probably will receive new communications. I must remain here. I won a hundred livres yesterday from d'Aversac, and I owe him his revenge."

"The rehearsal of the opera must be over, for I hear our friends humming in their falsest

voice the airs which they have not succeeded in retaining."

"Escape, before the hubbub upsets your nerves."

Guy pressed the Baron's hand, and, leaving the club, entered his carriage, which was waiting before the door.

## V.

GUY DE MALIVERT returned home fully decided to tempt his fate. Although he did not appear to be romantic, he was so, nevertheless; but a certain feeling of sensitive reserve forced him to hide his sentiments, and he asked of the world no more than he gave in return. The relations which connected him with society were agreeable enough so far as they went, and his ties were in no way galling, and could always be broken at his will; still, his heart dreamed of a happiness which as yet he had never encountered.

In obedience to what the Baron de Féroë had told him at the club of the effort of will necessary to bring spirits from the depths of the invisible world to the limits of this, Malivert summoned up all the strength of his being and concentrated his thoughts upon the desire to enter into more direct communication with the mysterious spirit which he felt was near him, and which would probably not resist the sum-

mons, since of its own accord it had attempted to manifest itself to him.

This done, Malivert, who was in the same room in which we found him at the beginning of this story, watched and listened with the most extreme attention, for—he scarcely knew what. At first he neither saw nor heard anything, and yet the lifeless objects which filled the apartment—the statuettes, pictures, old carved buffets, exotic curiosities, weapons, and arms—appeared to him to assume strange and unusual aspects. The lights and shadows projected by the lamp lent them a fantastic life. A grotesque figure of green china seemed grinning from ear to ear with a senile grimace, and a Venus of Milo, whose exquisite contours were displayed against a dark background, spitefully distended her proud nostrils and curved disdainfully her arched lips. The Chinese god and the Greek goddess alike disapproved of Malivert's undertaking — at all events, one might have believed so from the intelligent expression of their faces. Involuntarily, Malivert's eyes, as if entreated to do so by some secret voice, turned toward a Venetian mirror hung against a tapestry of Cordova leather.

It was one of those mirrors of the last century, such as are frequently seen in the pictures of Longhi, the Watteau of Venetian decadence, and as are still to be found in some of the bric-a-brac shops of the Ghetto. The beveled glass was encased in a frame of polished crystal, surmounted by garlands of flowers and leaves of the same material, which, against the smooth, dark background of the tapestry, sometimes looked like dull silver and sometimes launched forth prismatic rays from their facets. In the midst of this sparkling surrounding, the glass, of small dimensions, like all Venetian mirrors, appeared of a bluish-black, of fathomless depth, and as if it were an opening upon a space of boundless extent, filled with fantastic shadows.

It was an odd thing, but none of the objects opposite were reflected in it; one would have said that it was one of those theatrical glasses which the scene-painter covers with indistinct and neutral tints to prevent the reflection of the auditorium.

A vague instinct warned Malivert that if any revelation was to take place that evening, it would be by means of this mirror, which, as

a rule, he rarely noticed, but which now exercised over him a sort of fascination and invincibly compelled his regard. But although he kept his eyes fixed upon it, he could distinguish nothing upon the black surface, the mysterious density of which was intensified by the crystal ornamentation. At last, however, it seemed to him that in the shadowy gloom appeared a faint, milky-white vapor, like a distant, quivering light which was gradually approaching. He turned his head to see what object in the chamber had caused this reflection, but could perceive nothing. Although Guy was brave, and had proved it on more than one occasion, he could not control a certain feeling of fear, and the little shiver, of which Job speaks, ran over his flesh. This time, of his own free will and with a full knowledge of the consequences, he was about to cross the formidable threshold. He had set his foot outside the circle which nature has traced about mankind, and his life would probably be thrown out of its orbit and henceforth revolve about an unknown point. Although sceptics might ridicule it, no step could be more serious, and Guy fully realized all the importance of it;

but, nevertheless, an irresistible fascination drew him on, and he continued obstinately to keep his eyes fixed upon the Venetian mirror. What was he going to see? Under what aspect would the spirit appear and render itself perceptible to human vision? Would it be an agreeable or a terrible figure, bringing joy or horror? Although the light in the mirror had not yet assumed any distinct shape, Guy was confident that it would be a feminine spirit. The sigh which he had heard the evening before echoed too tenderly in his heart to allow his entertaining any other idea. Had the spirit ever belonged to the earth? Would it come from a higher region, or from some distant planet? Those were points he could know nothing of, and yet, from the question put to him by Baron de Féroë, he thought that it must be a soul which had passed through the conditions of this terrestrial existence, and that an attraction, the nature of which he would doubtless learn later, drew it toward its former sphere.

The luminous spot in the mirror was beginning to take a clearer form, and to be tinted with a color which was faint and immaterial,

so to speak, and which would have made the tints of the freshest palette appear coarse. It was rather the suggestion of a color than the color itself—a vapor flushed with light, and so delicately shaded that all human words would be powerless to describe it. Guy gazed in breathless suspense, a prey to the most intense emotion. The image became gradually more and more condensed, without, however, attaining the coarse, material substance of reality, and Guy at last could see, bordered by the crystal ornamentation, like a picture in its frame, the head of a young girl, so beautiful that all mortal beauty would pale and seem only a shadow in comparison. A pale, roseate hue faintly tinged the cheeks of the face where the lights and shades were but dimly defined, and which did not need any such contrast to bring out the features, as earthly faces do. The hair, of the tint of a saint's aureole, rippled in a golden mist above the low, white forehead. The half-lowered eyes, of a deep, dark blue, wore an expression of infinite gentleness and sweetness, recalling those places in the sky where, at twilight, seem to bloom clusters of violets. The nose was ideally delicate and

refined, and a smile like that of the Mona Lisa of Leonardo da Vinci, but with more tenderness and less irony, curved the exquisitely chiseled lips; the flexible neck, like the stem of a flower, was bent forward, and faded away into the silvery mist behind.

This feeble sketch, made, necessarily, with words created to describe the things of our world, can give only a very vague idea of the apparition which Guy de Malivert contemplated in the Venetian mirror. Did he see it with the eye of the flesh, or with the eye of the soul? Was the image really there, and would a person who was not in the same nervous and peculiarly susceptible state as Guy have been able to perceive it? This is difficult to determine; but, at all events, what he saw, although of the same nature, was by no means the same thing as what passes, in this life, for the face of a beautiful woman. The features were indeed the same; but they were purified, transfigured, idealized, and rendered perceptible by a substance in a certain sense immaterial, having only the density indispensable to be visible, in the thick, terrestrial atmosphere, to eyes from which the scales had not yet fallen.

The spirit, or the soul, which had revealed itself to Guy de Malivert, had unquestionably borrowed the shape of its former perishable envelope, but such as it might be in a finer, more ethereal place, where can live only the phantoms of things, and not the things themselves. The vision filled Guy with unspeakable rapture; the sensation of fear which he had felt at first was dissipated, and he abandoned himself unreservedly to the strange novelty of the situation, questioning nothing, accepting everything, and determined to find the supernatural natural. He approached the glass, thinking that by so doing he could see more distinctly the features of the image; but it remained as it had at first appeared, very near, and yet very far, seeming like the reflection upon the inner side of the mirror of a face placed at a distance too great for a human mind to measure. The real presence of what he saw, if one can use such an expression under such circumstances, was evidently in unknown regions, far away, inaccessible to the living, and across the borders of which even the boldest would scarcely dare to venture. Guy vainly endeavored to remember if he had ever seen the face before, upon any

living being; it was entirely new to him, and yet he seemed to recognize it; but where had he seen it? It was certainly not in this sublunary and terraqueous world.

This was the shape, then, in which it pleased *Spirite* to appear; for Guy de Malivert, not knowing what name to give to the apparition seen in the glass, had baptized it "Spirite," until he should know what appellation was more appropriate. It seemed to him, soon, that the image was fading away and vanishing into the depths of the mirror; in a few moments it was no more than the light vapor of a breath, and then this vapor itself was effaced. The complete disappearance of the apparition was marked by the sudden reflection of the gilded frame of a picture which hung on the wall opposite; the mirror had recovered its reflexive properties.

When he was quite sure that the apparition would not appear again, at least that evening, and in the same manner, Guy threw himself down in an arm-chair; although the silvery chime of the clock, striking two, warned him that it was fully time to go to bed, he could not make up his mind to do so. And yet he

felt fatigued; the new and strange emotions he had experienced — the first steps taken outside of the real world — had caused him a nervous lassitude, which put sleep to flight; and, moreover, he feared if he should lose consciousness, he would miss some manifestation of Spirite.

With his legs stretched out and his feet resting upon the fender before the fire, which had suddenly blazed up, apparently of its own accord, Guy reflected on all that had happened to him, the possibility of which he would assuredly have denied two days before. He thought of that lovely face, which recalled—only to cause them to be forgotten as vain shadows—the visions of beauty conjured up by the imagination of poets, the genius of painters, and the magical powers of dream-land. He found in Spirite a thousand nameless fascinations, a thousand attractions, which neither nature nor art could unite in one type, and from this specimen he formed a high opinion of the population of the other world. Then he wondered what strange sympathy, what mysterious and hitherto unavowed affinity could attract toward him, from the depths of the infinite, this angel, sylph, soul, spirit, of

the very essence of which, and to what immaterial order it belonged, he was in ignorance.

He did not dare to flatter himself that he had inspired with love a being of so superior a nature, for conceit was not one of Malivert's faults, and yet he was forced to recognize that Spirite, by the sigh she had breathed, by the letter the sense of which she had changed, by the warning murmured at Madame d'Ymbercourt's door, and by the words of the Swedish Baron, which were doubtless due to her influence, apparently felt for him, Guy de Malivert, a simple mortal, a sentiment of a thoroughly feminine nature, which in this world would be called jealousy. What he did understand at once, however, was that he was madly, desperately, irrevocably in love, and his whole being was suddenly invaded by a passion which eternity could not destroy.

From that moment all the women he had ever known were effaced from his memory. At Spirite's appearance he had forgotten terrestrial love, as Romeo forgot Rosalind when he saw Juliet. It was not without a certain terror that he felt himself attacked by that sudden flame which devoured all thought, all

will, all resistance, and left living in heart and brain naught but love; but it was too late—he was no longer his own master. The Baron de Féroë was right; it is a formidable thing to cross, living, the barriers of life, and to venture, an opaque body, among shadows, without having in one's hand the golden rod which compels obedience from phantoms.

A horrible idea crossed Malivert's brain. Suppose Spirite should take a caprice not to reappear, by what means could he bring her back? And if there were no means in existence, how could he endure the darkness after having, for an instant even, contemplated the real light? He felt as if some terrible misfortune had happened to him, and for an instant, which seemed an eternity, he was overwhelmed with the utmost despair. At this supposition, which was really without any basis, that he might never see Spirite again, the tears mounted to his eyes, quivered upon his lids, and although he made an effort to restrain them, ashamed to display such weakness even before himself alone, finally overflowed and rolled slowly down his cheeks. Suddenly, to his surprise and delight, he felt a veil finer

than the most delicate tissues woven of the air in a fairy loom, pass over his face, and brush away the bitter drops. The light contact of a moth's wings could not have been more dainty. It was no illusion, for the touch was repeated three times, and, his tears dried, Malivert fancied he could see floating in the shadow, like a little cloud in the heavens, a diaphanous, white film.

After this tender exhibition of sympathy, he could not doubt but that Spirite, who seemed to be always invisibly near him, would answer his appeal, and, with the power which belonged to her more exalted sphere, find easy methods of communication. She could come into the world which he inhabited, at least as much as a spirit can mingle with the living; but it was forbidden to him, a mortal, weighed down by the flesh, to follow her into the unknown, ideal regions to which she belonged.

When we say that Malivert passed from the most sombre despair to the purest rapture, we shall surprise no one. If a simple mortal can ten times a day alternately cast you down into the infernal regions and raise you to paradise, inspiring you now with the desire to blow your

brains out, and now with the idea of purchasing a villa on the shores of Lake Como to hide your happiness there forever, surely the emotions produced by a spirit can be no less poignant.

If Guy's passion for Spirite seems very sudden, it must be remembered that love at first sight is by no means impossible; that a woman gazed at from a distance through an opera-glass produces about the same effect as a faint reflection in a mirror, and that many serious passions have had no more startling origins; moreover, in Guy's case the love was less sudden than it appeared to be. For a long time, Spirite, although invisible, had been close to him, preparing his heart, without his suspecting it, for supernatural communications; suggesting to him, in the midst of the worldly frivolity about him, thoughts which were far above and beyond his surroundings; creating in him a thirst for the ideal, a longing for a better and higher life; turning him aside from trivial love affairs and inspiring him with a consciousness that there was a happiness which the world could not give him. It was she who had broken the fibres of all the webs which women had sought to spin about him; who had re-

vealed to him the folly or the perfidy of such or such a woman, in whom he had been for the time being more or less interested; and who, up to the present time, had kept his heart free from any indissoluble entanglement. She had arrested him just as he was about to take an irreparable step, for Guy's life was approaching a crisis; although there was no outward and visible indication of the fact, the "fatal three" were weighing his lot in the scales; and that was what had determined Spirite to depart from the darkness whence she had watched over him, and to manifest herself to Guy, whom occult influences were no longer powerful enough to direct. What was the motive of her interest in him? Was Spirite acting of her own free will, or in obedience to an order emanating from that radiant sphere where, according to Dante, one can do whatever one wishes? She alone was able to reveal that, and perhaps she will reveal it soon.

Finally, Malivert went to bed, and was soon in the Land of Nod. His sleep was light, and filled with marvelous fancies, not exactly of the character of a dream, but rather of a vision. There opened before his eyes vast extents of

space, where, upon an azure background, wavy ribbons of light formed valleys of gold and silver, which stretched away into the boundless distance; then this picture disappeared, to give place to broad torrents of blinding phosphorescence, like a cascade of liquefied suns, which fell from eternity into the infinite; the cascade vanished in its turn, and was replaced by an arched sky of that intense and luminous white which clothed the figures in the transfiguration upon Mount Tabor. Upon this sky, which one might have believed to be the very acme of splendor, burned, here and there, starry points — rays still more vivid, scintillations still more intense. This burst of light, against which the most brilliant stars would have appeared as if carved in ebony, seemed like a presage of eternity. From time to time, across the luminous arch passed, like birds before the disk of the sun, spirits, discernible not by their shadow, but by their different quality of light. Amidst the swarm Guy thought that he recognized Spirite, and he was not mistaken, although she appeared only as a radiant point in space, as a globule upon the incandescent resplendence.

Spirite herself was the instigator of this dream, as she wished to display herself to her adorer in her true sphere. The soul, freed during sleep from the captivity of the body, reveled in this vision, and for some minutes Guy was permitted to see with the eye of the spirit, not the other world itself, the contemplation of which is permitted only to souls entirely released from the thralldom of the flesh, but a ray filtering beneath the gates ajar, as one sees in a sombre street, under the door of a palace illuminated within, a gleam of light which conjures up an idea of the splendor of the festivities beyond. In a short time, however, Spirite, not wishing to fatigue too much Malivert's human organization, dispersed the vision, and plunged him from ecstacy into ordinary sleep. As he returned to the darkness of commonplace dreams, he felt as if he were being enclosed in a black marble sarcophagus, amidst a gloom of impenetrable density; then all was blotted out, even this sensation, and for hours he lay in that balmy unconsciousness from which one awakens to life brighter, fresher, and younger.

He slept until ten o'clock, and then Jack,

who was watching for his master's awakening, seeing that his eyes were open, pushed back the half-closed door, entered the chamber, drew aside the curtains, and, advancing to Malivert's bedside, presented a silver salver on which lay two letters which had arrived that morning. One was from Madame d'Ymbercourt, and the other from Baron de Féroë. Guy opened the Baron's first.

## VI.

BARON DE FEROE'S letter contained only these words: "Has Cæsar crossed the Rubicon?" That of Madame d'Ymbercourt was much less brief, and hinted, through many tortuous sentences, that it would be better not to pay too much attention to idle gossip, and that to suddenly cut short the customary visits would be perhaps more compromising than to increase them. The whole concluded with an allusion to Adelina Patti—a sort of suggestion to Malivert that a place would be reserved for him in Box 22 at the Italiens. Guy unquestionably warmly admired the great diva, but, in his present state of mind, he preferred to hear her another evening, and he resolved to invent some excuse for his non-appearance.

There is in the human mind a tendency to doubt extraordinary events, when the place where they have occurred has resumed its customary aspect; and therefore Malivert, as he looked, in the broad light of day, into the Venetian mirror, gleaming bluely in the midst of

its crystal frame, and saw only the reflection of his own face, wondered if it were really true that only a few hours before that bit of polished glass had presented to him the most exquisite image that the eye of mortal had ever beheld. It was to no purpose that his reason attributed this celestial vision to a dream, a mirage of the brain; his heart gave the lie to his reason. Difficult as it is to appreciate the reality of the supernatural, he felt that it was all true, and that behind the apparent tranquility that reigned about him there hovered a whole world of mystery. Yet, nothing was changed in his apartments, and a visitor would have noticed nothing peculiar; but henceforth the door of every sideboard, every desk, would suggest to Guy an opening upon the infinite. He started and trembled at every sound, lest it might be some warning or communication from the other world.

To escape from the nervous excitement he felt stealing over him, he resolved to take a long drive; he felt confident that Spirite's appearances would be nocturnal, and, moreover, if she had any communication to make to him, her strange ubiquity would furnish her

with means to find him and manifest herself to him wherever he might be. In this love affair, if such a term may be used to describe anything so indefinite, frail, ethereal, impalpable, Malivert's part was necessarily a passive one. The ideal mistress of his heart could at any moment enter his world, but it was impossible for him to follow her into the shadowy regions where she abode.

It had snowed the night before; and, a rare thing in Paris, the white covering of the earth had not melted, beneath the rays of a warm sun, into that cold, gruel-like substance which is even worse than the black mud of the old streets or the yellow mire of the macadamized boulevards; the crisp frost had crystalized it, and it crackled like broken glass beneath the wheels of the carriages and the feet of the pedestrians. Grymalkin was a good trotter, and Malivert had brought from Saint Petersburg a sleigh and a complete Russian harness. Opportunities for sleighing are not frequent in the mild climate of Paris, and when they do occur, lovers of the sport seize upon them with enthusiasm. Guy was proud of his turnout, which was by all odds the most faultless in

Paris, and indeed might have appeared with honor upon the banks of the Neva. He had acquired, during a rigorous winter passed in Russia, a taste for the northern delights of ice and cold, and he loved to glide over the sparkling, snowy expanse, slightly marked by the steel of the runners, guiding with both hands, after the fashion of the *ivoschtchiks*, a horse of beauty and speed. To-day the thought of a rapid rush through the bracing, healthy air was peculiarly attractive to him; so he ordered his sleigh to be harnessed, and had soon reached the Place de la Concorde and the Champs-Elysées. The conditions were not so favorable as they would have been on the Newsky Perspective; but the snow was thick enough to allow the sleigh to move smoothly on without many unpleasant jerks. It would not have been fair to expect in Paris the perfection of a Muscovite winter; and yet, in the Bois de Boulogne, one might easily have fancied oneself in the *Isles*, so white and smooth was the snow, especially in the side avenues, which are less frequented by carriages and equestrians. Malivert entered a road which passed through a little wood of fir-trees whose

brown branches, laden with snow which the wind had not disturbed, recalled to him his excursions in Russia. He was abundantly supplied with furs, and the keen wind seemed to him but a gentle zephyr in comparison with the mercury-freezing temperature he had faced in the North.

There was a considerable crowd gathered on the borders of the lake, and the crush of carriages was as great as in the most beautiful days of spring or autumn, when races between the most celebrated stars of the turf attract to Longchamp curiosity seekers of all ranks and fortunes. Lying back amidst the soft cushions of their comfortable carriages, beneath white bear-skin robes edged with scarlet, were women of the highest rank and position, pressing against their fur-lined mantles their warm, sable muffs. Majestically seated upon the boxes, draped with heavy cloth and loaded with passementerie, the dignified coachmen, their shoulders protected by capes of fox-fur, regarded, with a glance no less disdainful than that of their mistresses, the yellow-haired damsels driving, themselves, ponies attached to extravagant and brilliantly painted vehicles.

There were also many closed carriages, for, in Paris, the idea of driving out in an open carriage with the thermometer hovering about zero is altogether too arctic and boreal. A certain number of sleighs were noticeable among the multitude of wheeled vehicles, but Malivert's took the palm from them all. Several Russian gentlemen who were lounging about, as contented as reindeer in the snow, deigned to signify their approval of the graceful shape of the *douga*, and the perfect manner in which the various parts of the handsome harness were adjusted.

It was about three o'clock; along the horizon a slight fog was beginning to form, and against the gray background the slender branches of the denuded trees stood out like the filaments of desiccated leaves. A rayless sun, like a round splash of red wax, was descending into the clouds.

The lake was covered with skaters. Three or four days of freezing weather had thickened the ice sufficiently to make it capable of bearing the weight of the crowd. The snow had been swept off and piled up on the banks, and the bluish, gleaming surface of the ice

which was left exposed was marked in all directions by the sharp edges of the skates, like a mirror in an inn parlor, where innumerable pairs of lovers have scratched their names with the point of a diamond. Near the bank were men with skates to let, for the use of the clerks and shop-boys, whose falls served as comic interludes to the winter's fête—this species of ballet from "The Prophet" executed on a grand scale. In the middle of the lake, fancy skaters, in trim costumes, displayed their skill; spinning along with lightning-like speed, suddenly changing their course, avoiding collisions, stopping short by a dig of the heel into the ice, describing curves, spirals, figure eights, or tracing letters, like the Arabian horsemen, who, with the point of their spurs, write against the grain the name of Allah upon the flank of their steeds. Some pushed before them light, fancifully ornamented sledges, tenanted by beautiful women swathed in furs, who, intoxicated with the cold and the swift motion, looked up laughingly into the faces of their guides. Others skated hand in hand with fashionable girls, whose heads were crowned with Russian or Hungarian caps, and who wore braided jackets

edged with silver fox and skirts of brilliant colors half looped up over tiny varnished boots, crossed by the straps of the skates as with the bands of a cothurnus. Others still, in a trial of speed, glided upon one foot, leaning forward like Hippomenes and Atalanta in the group under the chestnut-trees of the gardens of the Tuileries. The way to win the race to-day, as in antiquity, would have been, perhaps, to cast apples of gold before these Atalantas costumed by Worth.

The ever-changing kaleidoscope of rich and original costumes—a sort of masked ball upon the ice—formed a graceful, animated, and charming spectacle, worthy of the brush of Watteau, Lancret, or Baron. Certain groups recalled vividly those designs above the door of old châteaux, where winter is represented by gallants pushing in swan-shaped sledges dainty marquises in black velvet masks, who use their muffs as receptacles for love-letters. To be sure, there were no masks upon these pretty faces flushed with the frosty air, but the half-veils, sprinkled with steel or fringed with jet, formed no mean substitute.

Malivert had stopped his sleigh near the

lake, and was watching the amusing and picturesque scene, the principal actors in which were so well known to him that he could easily distinguish the love affairs and flirtations which were going on among them. It was no difficulty for him to pick out the chief personages of the comedy from the crowd of supernumeraries, without which no spectacle is complete, and whose chief service seems to be to prevent the action of the play being too clear and bald. But he contemplated it all with eyes which henceforth could find no interest in such scenes, and he even noticed, without the slightest feeling of jealousy, a very charming young person, who had once been most kind to him, leaning in a manner that was almost affectionate upon the arm of a handsome skater.

It was not long before he gathered up the reins from the back of Grymalkin, who had been stamping impatiently in the snow, turned his head toward Paris, and commenced descending the avenue of the lake, which was a continual parade of carriages, where the bystanders had the pleasure of seeing pass and repass, ten or twelve times in the course of an hour, the same yellow-bodied chariot bearing a sol-

emn dowager, and the same little coupé at the window of which appears a Havanese poodle and a damsel with banged hair—a pleasure which they seem never to weary of. As Guy turned into the crowded avenue, he was forced to moderate the speed of his horse, through fear of running over somebody, and, besides, fast driving is not considered good form in this fashionable thoroughfare. He had not proceeded far, when he saw coming toward him a well-known equipage which he would have preferred to avoid, and did not expect to meet. Madame d'Ymbercourt was rather a chilly being, and Guy never supposed that she would venture out with the thermometer below zero, in which he showed his scant knowledge of women; for no temperature could prevent them from going to a place where fashion demands that they should be seen. Now, it was considered, this winter, the proper thing to appear in the Bois and drive around the frozen lake—a meeting-place, between three and five o'clock, of *all Paris*, to use the words of society reporters; and no woman of any prominence whatever in the social world could afford to have her name omitted from the list of the beauties

of the day published in the fashionable journals. Madame d'Ymbercourt was in possession of sufficient wealth, beauty, and position to believe herself obliged to conform to the rites of fashion, and she therefore undertook, shivering a little under her wealth of furs, the pilgrimage of the lake. Malivert longed to let Grymalkin forge ahead at the top of his speed, and the horse would have liked nothing better; but Madame d'Ymbercourt had perceived him, and he was forced to rein in his sleigh beside her carriage.

He was talking to her on general and indifferent subjects, alleging a large dinner which would end very late, to avoid the visit to the Italiens, when suddenly he was startled by the looming up of another sleigh which almost brushed against his own. This sleigh was drawn by a magnificent horse of the Orloff breed, iron-gray, with a white mane and one of those tails that seem to be formed of threads of silver. Kept in check by a heavily bearded Russian coachman, in a caftan of green cloth and a velvet cap bordered with astrakhan, he chafed proudly beneath the curb, and stepped so high that his nostrils seemed to touch his

knees. The elegance of the turnout, the style of the coachman, and the beauty of the horse attracted Guy's attention; but his feelings can better be imagined than described, when, in the lady seated in the corner of the sleigh, and whom he had taken at first for one of those Russian princesses who come for one or two seasons to startle Paris with their wealth and eccentricity—if Paris can be startled at anything—he recognized, or thought he recognized, a face he had gazed upon but once, and which was henceforth indelibly engraven upon his heart, but which he certainly did not expect to encounter in the Bois de Boulogne, after having seen it appear, like Helen to Faust, in a sort of magic mirror. At sight of her, he started so violently that Grymalkin, feeling a nervous twitch upon the reins, bounded forward. Guy, shouting a few words of excuse to Madame d'Ymbercourt for the impatience of his horse that he declared himself unable to control, began to follow the sleigh, whose pace had also quickened.

As if surprised at being followed, the lady half turned her head and looked over her shoulder to see who had dared commit this

boldness; and although Guy could see only her profile, and that not completely, he managed to catch a glimpse, through the folds of her veil, of a mass of rippling gold hair, a dark-blue eye, and upon the cheek that delicate rose-colored tint which only the snows of lofty peaks tinged by the rays of the setting sun can give even a distant idea of. In her ear was a turquoise, and over the part of the neck which was visible between her mantle and the brim of her hat wandered a little stray curl, fine and silky as the hair of a child. It was indeed the vision of the previous night, but invested with that degree of reality which a phantom must perforce assume in broad daylight and near the lake of the Bois de Boulogne. How did it happen that Spirite was there, clothed in a form so humanly charming, and doubtless visible to others beside himself? for it was difficult to believe, even while admitting the intangibility of the apparition, that the coachman, the horse, and the sleigh were shadows. This was a question, however, which Guy did not pause to consider; but, to assure himself that he was not deceived by one of those chance resemblances which disappear upon closer scrutiny,

he tried to pass the sleigh, in order to see the full face of the mysterious lady. He touched Grymalkin with the whip, and the animal shot forward like an arrow, and for some moments his breath, in jets of white vapor, clouded the back of the forward sleigh; but although he was a brave horse, Grymalkin was no match for the Russian steed—the finest specimen of the race, perhaps, that Malivert had ever seen. The coachman in the caftan made a slight clicking sound with his tongue, and the iron-gray horse, in a few impetuous strides, had soon distanced Grymalkin, and placed between the two sleighs a space sufficient to reassure his mistress, if indeed she were in the least alarmed.

Evidently, the lady who bore so strong a resemblance to Spirite had no idea of humiliating Malivert too deeply, and so cause him to give up the pursuit in despair, for her sleigh soon took a more moderate pace. The two vehicles had now reached the avenue of firs, which happened to be unobstructed by any carriage, and the chase therefore had a free course. Still, Grymalkin could not overtake the steed of the Orloff race. His utmost efforts

only succeeded in keeping the distance between one sleigh and the other about the same. The iron-clad hoofs of the horses sent flying through the air flaky lumps of snow, which were ground into an icy powder against the high, varnished dash-boards, and the white steam produced by the breathing of the splendid animals enveloped them in clouds of mist. At the extreme end of the avenue, where it joined the highway, the two sleighs were for an instant side by side, and as at this moment the wind blew aside her veil, Guy could see for a second or two the face of the fictitious Russian. A smile of celestial mischief played about her lips, the curves of which followed the same lines as those of the mouth of the Mona Lisa. Her eyes sparkled with the azure radiance of sapphires, and a delicate, misty rose color tinted her velvety cheeks. It was but for a moment, however, and then Spirite, for it was indeed she, lowered her veil, and the coachman spoke to his horse, who at the word sprung forward with terrible impetuosity. Guy uttered a cry of horror, for at the same time a heavy barouche crossed the road, and forgetting that Spirite was an incorporeal being, impervious to any

terrestrial mishap, he believed that a frightful accident was inevitable; but as if traversing a bank of fog, horse, coachman, and sleigh passed through and beyond the barouche, and soon Malivert lost them from sight. Grymalkin seemed frightened; he started and shuddered, and his legs, usually so steady, shook with nervous tremblings. The instinct of animals is profound and mysterious; they frequently see what escapes the heedless eye of man, and it seems as if many of them recognize the presence of the supernatural. Grymalkin was soon reassured, however, as he joined on the borders of the lake the procession of real equipages.

As he descended the Avenue de l'Impératrice, Guy met Baron de Féroë, who was also returning from the Bois in a light droschki. After asking of Malivert fire to light his cigar, the Baron said, with an air half mysterious, half bantering: "I am afraid that Madame d'Ymbercourt will not be very much pleased at your conduct; what a scene she will treat you to at the Italiens this evening, if you are imprudent enough to go there! For I don't think that steeple-chase you indulged in was very much

to her taste. By the way, you had best tell Jack to throw a blanket over Grymalkin, unless you wish him to catch cold."

## VII.

ABNORMAL occurrences no longer had any power to startle Guy, and he did not consider it in the least extraordinary that a sleigh should pass bodily through a carriage. The ease in overcoming obstacles that would have broken to pieces material vehicles demonstrated beyond a doubt that this was a chimerical equipage belonging to the stables of the mist, and which must, perforce, have carried none other than Spirite.

Unquestionably, Spirite was jealous, or, at all events, all her actions proved that she desired to separate Malivert from Madame d'Ymbercourt, and the means she employed were certainly good; for as he turned the Rond-Point de l'Etoile, Guy saw the Countess' carriage approaching, and the lady seemed to be listening with a very indulgent air to the presumably flattering words poured into her ear by Monsieur d'Aversac, who was walking his horse close to the carriage door.

"She is taking her revenge for the affair of

the sleigh," thought Malivert, "but I am not a man to be piqued into jealousy. D'Aversac makes the same pretense to wit that Madame d'Ymbercourt does to beauty, without either of them possessing the real article. They are admirably suited to one another, and a match between them would be an excellent thing. However, it is all a matter of supreme indifference to me, as the affairs of this world no longer concern me."

Madame d'Ymbercourt's little bit of strategy, therefore, failed of its effect. When she caught sight of Guy, she had leaned forward in a most gracious manner to respond to Monsieur d'Aversac's compliments. The poor Countess thought that she could win back her quondam adorer by wounding his vanity. Although she had caught but a glimpse of Spirite, she divined that there had arisen in her a formidable rival. The eagerness of Guy, who was ordinarily so self-possessed, to follow the mysterious sleigh containing the woman whom no one had ever encountered in the Bois before, wounded her to the quick; for she did not give the least credence to his hasty excuses and his statement that Grymalkin was beyond his con-

trol. If d'Aversac had been a wise man, instead of being puffed up with conceit, he would have attributed the unusual graciousness with which he was treated to its real cause —feminine spite. But, on the contrary, he accepted it as due to his own merit, and, with great magnanimity, pitied that poor Malivert who had been too confident of Madame d'Ymbercourt's affection; and the gentleman, in his conceit, aided, it must be confessed, somewhat by appearances, proceeded to build innumerable air-castles upon the little event.

That evening Guy dined at a house where the invitation had been given so long beforehand that it was impossible for him not to be present. Fortunately, there were many guests, and his preoccupation passed unnoticed. When the dinner was over, he exchanged a few words with his hostess, and then managed a skillful retreat to another room, where he found several men of his acquaintance who had retired there to talk business or scandal. He finally succeeded in slipping away from the house, and hastened at once to the club, where he hoped to meet Baron de Féroë, and where, in fact, he found him seated at a small card-table, playing

écarté with the still beaming d'Aversac, who, in simple justice we must confess, attempted to conceal his satisfaction in order not to humiliate Malivert. Despite the declaration of the proverb, "Lucky in love, unlucky at play," d'Aversac was winning, which, if he had possessed ever so little superstition, should have inspired him with doubts as to the solid foundation of his hopes. When the game which was in progress was ended, the Baron, as he had lost, could rise, pretend fatigue, and courteously refuse the revenge which his adversary offered him. He took Guy de Malivert's arm, and together they left the club and strolled up and down the nearest boulevard.

"What will the fashionable frequenters of the Bois," said Guy, "think of the woman, the sleigh, the horse, and the coachman, all so noticeable and so utterly unknown?"

"They were visible only to you, the Countess, upon whom the spirit wished to make an impression, and myself, who am enabled to see what is beyond the vision of other men. You can be sure that if Madame d'Ymbercourt mentions the beautiful Russian princess and her superb turnout, no one will understand what she means."

"Do you think," asked Malivert, "that I shall see Spirite again soon?"

"You can expect to do so very shortly," responded Monsieur de Féroë. "My advices from the other world inform me that you will not be kept waiting long."

"Will it be to-night or to-morrow, at my house or in some unexpected place, as happened to-day?" demanded Malivert, with the impatience of a lover and the curiosity of a neophyte.

"I can not tell you the precise time and place," replied the Swedish Baron. "For spirits there is no such thing as time, since they are elements of eternity. It would mean the same thing to Spirite if she were to see you this evening or a thousand years hence; but the spirits who deign to enter into communication with us poor mortals, take into consideration the brief span of our life and the imperfection and frailty of our organism; they know that between one appearance and another, measured by the dial of eternity, the perishable form of man might a hundred times over have fallen into dust, and it is probable that Spirite will soon satisfy your longing to behold her

again. She has descended to our sphere, and appears determined not to mount again to her own until her design is accomplished."

"But what is her design?" said Malivert. "You, to whom the supernatural world is as an open book, must know the motive which has led this pure spirit to seek a being who is still subject to the conditions of life."

"Upon that point, my dear Guy," was the Baron's response, "my lips are sealed; I must not repeat the secrets of a spirit. I have been warned to place you on your guard against forming any ties that might cause you eternal regret. My mission goes no further."

As they talked, Malivert and the Baron, followed by their carriages, which proceeded slowly along near the curb, reached the Madeleine, whose Greek columns, silvered by the pale rays of the wintry moon, looked, from the end of the broad Rue Royale, not unlike the Parthenon, a resemblance which completely disappears in the full light of day. Here the two friends separated, and each entered his respective coupé.

When he reached home, Malivert threw himself down in a chair, and, with his elbows rest-

ing upon the table, abandoned himself to thought. Spirite's appearance in the mirror had inspired him with the spiritual longing and the soaring aspirations the sight of an angel might give birth to, but her presence on the borders of the lake, in a form more really feminine, had kindled in his heart all the flame of human love. He felt permeated by an overpowering, ardent passion which even eternal possession would never quench. As he dreamed on, with his arm thrust out upon the mass of papers with which the table was covered, all at once he saw appear upon the dark background of the Turkish cloth a long, narrow hand, of a more exquisite shape than art has ever equaled, and which nature would try in vain to attain; a diaphanous hand with tapering fingers, nails polished like onyx, and with the azure veins showing through like those iris-like reflections that sleep in the milky heart of an opal. Exquisite in its coloring and ideally delicate in its shape, it could be the hand of no other than Spirite. The slender, refined, high-bred wrist faded away in a vapor of filmy laces. As if to show that the hand was there only as a sign, the arm and

body were absent. As Guy regarded it with eyes which could no more be astonished by the extraordinary, the fingers of the hand reached out to one of the sheets of letter-paper with which the table was littered, and imitated the action of writing. They seemed to be tracing words, and when they had traversed the page with that rapidity which actors show in inditing a letter upon the stage, Guy seized the sheet, expecting to find written sentences, known or unknown signs. The paper, however, was completely blank. Astonished and disappointed, Guy held it close to the rays of the lamp, and scrutinized it under all aspects, but without discovering the least mark upon it. And yet the hand was continuing upon another sheet the same imaginary labor, and with no more apparent result.

"What does this mean?" wondered Malivert. "Is Spirite writing with sympathetic ink which must be held to the fire to bring out the characters traced? But the mysterious fingers are holding no pen nor the shadow of a pen. What does she wish to convey? Must I serve as the spirit's secretary, be my own medium, so to speak? They say that spirits who can pro-

duce illusions and conjure up in the brains of mortals terrifying or entrancing pictures, are incapable of any influence over things purely material, and can not move even a straw a hair's breadth."

He remembered the strange impulse which had made him write the letter to Madame d'Ymbercourt, and he thought that perhaps Spirite might succeed, by some mental telegraph, in dictating to him what she wished to say. He had only to relax the muscles of his hand, and silence as much as possible his own ideas, so that they should not mingle with those of the spirit. With an effort to isolate himself from his surroundings, and to quell the excited tumult of his brain, he raised the wick of the lamp, filled a pen with ink, placed his hand upon the paper, and, in a state between hope and fear, waited.

At the end of a few moments, he experienced a peculiar sensation; it seemed to him that his own personality was leaving him; that his recollections of the past were fading like the memories of a dream, and that his reasoning powers were fleeing from him, like birds gradually mounting higher and higher until they

are lost to sight in the heavens. Although his body remained in the same attitude at the table, Guy himself was absent. Another soul, or at least another mind, was substituted for his own, and was in command of the members of his body, which, to act, awaited the orders of their unknown master. The fingers shivered with nervous tremblings, and commenced apparently mechanically to execute movements with the pen, rapidly tracing letters in Guy's handwriting, slightly modified with a certain foreign characteristic. The following is what Spirite dictated to her medium. This confession from the other world was found among Malivert's papers, and we have received permission to copy it:

DICTATED BY SPIRITE.

It is important, first of all, for you to know and comprehend the being who has glided into your life, and who is so inexplicable to you. However great your penetration might be, it would be impossible for you to discover her true nature; so, like the hero of a poorly constructed tragedy, who announces his name, rank, and characteristics, I am forced to explain myself; but I have this excuse, that there is no one who

could undertake the task for me. Your intrepid heart, which did not hesitate at my call to plunge into the mysterious terrors of the unknown, has no need to be reassured. Besides, if danger did exist, that would not prevent you continuing in the path upon which you have entered. This invisible world, of which the real is the veil, is not without snares and pitfalls, but you will not fall therein. It is infested with spirits of falsehood and wickedness; there are angels of darkness as well as angels of light; rebellious powers and submissive powers; legions of benevolence and legions of iniquity. The foot of the mystical ladder, the summit of which is plunged in eternal light, is encompassed in darkness. With my aid, I hope that you will mount the luminous steps. I am neither angel nor demon, nor one of those herald spirits who bear through boundless space the divine will, as the nervous current communicates to the members of the body the human will. I am simply a soul awaiting its judgment, but one that, by divine goodness, has been allowed to foresee a favorable sentence. I therefore once inhabited your world, and I might quote the words of the

melancholy epitaph of the shepherd in Poussin's picture: *Et in Arcadiâ ego.* Do not think because I quote Latin that I was in life a woman of high intellectual acquirements. In the place where I now am we possess all knowledge, and the various languages which the human race has spoken before and since the destruction of Babel are equally familiar to us. Words are only the shadow of the idea, and we have the idea itself in its essential state. If there were such a thing as age in a place where time is unknown, I should be very young in my new country; but a few days have passed since, loosened from my bondage by death, I quitted the atmosphere which you breathe; but a sentiment, which not even the transition from one world to the other has been able to efface, has forced me to return. My terrestrial life—or, better, my last appearance upon your planet—was very short; but it was long enough for me to suffer all the sorrow a sensitive heart can feel. When the Baron de Féroë was seeking the nature of the spirit whose vague manifestations disturbed you, and asked you if any woman, any young girl, had ever died of love for you, he was nearer the truth than

he believed, and although naturally you could remember nothing of the sort, since you were in ignorance of the fact, you were greatly disturbed by the question, and your emotion was but poorly concealed by a denial half mocking, half disdainful.

Without your perceiving it, my life was passed near yours. Your eyes were elsewhere, and you never noticed me.

The first time that I saw you was in the parlor of the Convent des Oiseaux, where you were in the habit of going to visit your sister, who was there at school with me, although in a much higher class, for I was not more than thirteen or fourteen years of age, and I was so frail, small, and pale that I appeared much younger. You paid no attention to the little girl who, while munching the chocolate pralines from Marquis' which her mother had brought her, favored you now and then with a shy, furtive glance. At that time you must have been twenty or twenty-two, and in my childish artlessness I thought you very handsome. The kind and affectionate manner in which you spoke to your sister quite won my heart, and I longed to have a brother like you. My girlish

desires went no further. When Mademoiselle de Malivert's studies were finished, they took her away from the convent, and you came there no more; but your image was never effaced from my memory. It was preserved upon the white parchment of my mind, like those faint lineaments traced in pencil by a skillful hand, and which are found long afterward, faded, but still to be distinguished, the only vestiges, perhaps, of one who has disappeared. The idea that such a distinguished personage could have noticed me, who was still in the infant class, and whom the more advanced scholars treated with a sort of disdain, would have been too presumptuous, and it never once crossed my brain, at least at that time; but I thought of you very often, and in those chaste romances which the most innocent imaginations weave, it was you who always filled the rôle of Prince Charming; you who delivered me from fancied perils; you who conducted me through underground passages; you who put to flight the corsairs and the brigands, and brought me back safe to the king, my father; for, of course, to be worthy of such a hero, I had to be at least a princess, and I modestly assumed the rank.

Sometimes, the romance was changed into a pastoral; you were a shepherd, I a shepherdess, and our flocks browsed together in a meadow covered with the tenderest green herbage. You had not the faintest conception of it, but you occupied a large place in my life—had become, in fact, my sovereign lord. I, in imagination, reported to you all my little successes in my studies, and I worked with all my strength to deserve your approbation. I said to myself, "He does not know that I have won a prize; but if he did know it, he would be pleased." And, although naturally idle, I applied myself to my work with renewed energy. Is it not strange that a child should give its heart in secret and become a vassal of the lord of its choice, without the latter even suspecting the liege homage tendered him? Is it not stranger still that this early impression was never effaced? for it lasted a whole life—a very short one, alas! and continues beyond the grave. When I saw you, there awoke in me something indefinable, mysterious, the meaning of which I did not understand until the closing of my eyes opened them forever. My present condition as an impalpable being, a pure spirit,

permits me to relate to you things which a girl of earth might perhaps hide; but the immaculate whiteness of a soul knows nothing of blushes; celestial modesty confesses love.

Two years passed away. From a child I became a young girl, and my dreams, while preserving all their innocence, began to be a little less puerile; there were mingled in them less rose color and azure, and they did not always end in the glory of an apotheosis. I used often to go to the foot of the garden, and, seated upon a bench, far from my companions, who were occupied with their games and their whispered conversations, I would murmur as a sort of litany the syllables of your name; but sometimes I was hardy enough to think that this name might some day be my own, after mischances and adventures as intricate as those of an old-fashioned comedy of the sixteenth century, and the incidents of which I arranged and altered at pleasure.

In point of birth I was your equal, and my parents enjoyed a rank and fortune which rendered by no means chimerical or absurd this distant project of a union that I had formed very timidly in the inmost recesses of my heart.

Nothing was more probable than that we should meet some day in that society to which we both had access. But would I please you? Would you think me pretty? Those were questions to which the narrow glass in my little room did not return a negative answer, as you may judge from my reflection in your Venetian mirror and my appearance in the Bois de Boulogne. But suppose you should pay no more attention to the young girl than you had to the child of the Convent des Oiseaux! That thought overwhelmed me with discouragement; but youth never despairs long, and I soon returned to brighter visions. It seemed to me impossible that, when you beheld me, you should not recognize your property, your conquest, the soul sealed with your soul, the heart that had been vowed to your adoration from infancy; in a word, the woman created expressly for you. I did not put it to myself so clearly as this; I did not possess that knowledge of the movements of the heart that I have acquired, now that I can see both sides of life; but it was an unerring instinct, a blind faith, an irresistible conviction. In spite of my virginal innocence and purity, there was kindled in my

heart a passion which was destined to devour me, and which is now revealed for the first time. At the convent I made no friends, and I lived alone with the thought of you for my sole companion. Jealous of my secret, I dreaded disclosures and confidences, and I would form no attachment which might interfere with my one thought and hope. They called me "La Sérieuse," and the sisters pointed me out as an example.

I awaited the time fixed for my departure from the convent with less impatience than one might suppose; my sojourn there was a respite between thought and action.

As long as I was confined between those high walls, I had the right to nurse my dream without any reason for self-reproach; but once freed from the cage, I must spread my wings, direct myself to my goal, mount toward my star; and custom, propriety, modesty—the multitude of veils which civilization draws about a young girl—forbids her any initiative in affairs of the heart. No manner of revealing her feelings to the object of her affections is permitted to her. A proper feeling of pride prevents her from offering what should be

beyond all price. Her eyes must remain lowered, her lips mute, her bosom motionless; no blush, no pallor, must betray her when she finds herself in the presence of the object secretly loved, and who often retires believing that she feels for him only disdain or indifference. How many hearts made for one another, for the lack of a word, a look, a smile, have taken divergent paths which separated them more and more, and rendered their reunion forever impossible! How many lives that have been deplorably unsuccessful, have owed their unhappiness to some mischance unperceived by all, and sometimes unrevealed to the victims themselves! I had often indulged in such reflections, and they were predominant in my mind at the moment when I was about to leave the convent to enter the world. However, my resolution did not falter.

The day of my departure arrived. My mother came for me, and I bade farewell to my companions without any remarkable display of feeling. I left behind me no friend within those walls where many years of my life had been passed, and I carried away no regret. The thought of you, and the thought of you alone, formed all the treasures of my heart.

## VIII.

IT was with a keen feeling of pleasure that I entered the room, or rather the little suite of apartments, that my mother had prepared for my return from the convent. There were a bed-chamber, a large dressing-room, and a parlor, the windows of which looked out upon a garden, or rather a succession of gardens; a low wall, thickly overgrown with ivy, served as a dividing-line between the different properties; but the stone was nowhere visible, and you could see only masses and groups of ancient trees, gigantic chestnuts, which produced the effect of a boundless park. In the distance, between the branches appeared the angle of a roof, the odd, twisted outline of a chimney—a mark which Paris places low down upon the horizon of all her views. It is a rare gratification, and one reserved for the wealthy, to have spread out before you, in the midst of the great city, a broad, free space of air, sky, sunshine, and verdure. Is it not disagreeable to feel crowded in upon you other lives,

passions, vices, misfortunes, and are not your delicacy and modesty a little smirched by the contact? So I felt genuine delight as I looked out from my windows upon this oasis of freshness, silence, and solitude. It was in the month of August that I ended my last scholastic year at the convent, and the foliage was still thick, although it had acquired the deeper coloring which the passage of summer lends to vegetation. In the middle of the flower-bed which was laid out beneath my windows, a mass of geraniums in full bloom dazzled the eye with their scarlet flame, the vivid red forming a striking contrast to the emerald turf of the lawn of English grass. In the walks of fine sand, which had been raked until they looked like strips of watered ribbon, the birds hopped about in perfect confidence, and had the air of being at home. I resolved to join them in their walks without frightening them away.

My chamber was hung with white cashmere, marked off here and there with cords of blue silk. The curtains were also blue, and the furniture was covered with the same shade. In my little parlor, which was decorated in a sim-

ilar manner, a magnificent Erard piano offered its keys to my eager hands, which at once drew forth notes both soft and deep. A rose-wood book-case, placed opposite the piano, contained those pure books, those chaste poets, which a maiden may read; and upon the lower shelves rested the scores of the great composers: Bach elbowed Haydn, Mozart was beside Beethoven, a conjunction similar to that of Raphael and Michael Angelo, and Meyerbeer leaned against Weber. My mother had collected together my favorite composers. A beautiful jardiniére, full of the sweetest scented flowers, brightened the center of the room, and looked like an enormous bouquet. They all treated me like a spoiled child. I was an only daughter, and the entire affection of my parents was naturally concentrated upon me.

I was to make my début in society at the beginning of the season—that is to say, in two or three months, when people returned from their country visits, their journeys, their stay at the sea-shore, the hunts, the races, and all that has been invented to consume the time when it is proper for people who boast social supremacy to be absent from Paris, where a

matter of business had detained my father and mother this particular year. I greatly preferred to remain in the city, rather than to go to the somewhat dismal old château in the heart of Brittany, where I had always spent my vacations; and, besides, I thought that I might have chances to meet you, to hear of you, and to encounter people who knew you; but I learned, in an indirect fashion, that you had been in Spain for a long time, and might remain there for several months longer. Your friends, to whom you wrote but rarely, did not expect you back before winter; they laughingly said that you were a captive in the network of some fair señorita's mantilla. This did not cause me much uneasiness, for I was conceited enough to believe that my golden locks could vie successfully with all the jetty tresses of Andalusia. I learned also that you wrote articles for the magazines, using as a pseudonym a Latinized form of one of your Christian names, a fact which only your intimate friends were aware of, and that under your exterior of a man of the world lurked a distinguished writer. With a curiosity easy to understand, I sought through the periodicals

for all the articles which bore your signature. To read an author is to place yourself in direct communication with his heart and mind. Is not a book a confidential epistle addressed to an ideal friend, a monologue delivered to one who is absent? What an author says must not always be taken too literally; one should take into account literary style, affectations that happen to be the fashion, a certain reticence which must perforce be practiced, the unconscious imitation of some favorite writer, and all that may tend to modify the outer expression of ideas. But under all disguises the real qualities of heart and mind are certain to be revealed to him who knows how to read; the true thought is often hidden between the lines, and the secret of the poet, which he does not always wish to divulge to the vulgar crowd, is finally discovered; one after another the veils fall, and the solutions of the enigmas are guessed. In order to form an idea of what you were, I studied with the closest attention your tales of journeyings, your bits of philosophy and criticism, your stories, and the stanzas of verse which were scattered here and there throughout your writings, and which

gave an insight into the different phases of your mind. It is less difficult to become acquainted with a subjective author than with an objective one. The former expresses his own sentiments, declares his own ideas, and judges society and the world from an ideal point of view which is the outcome of his own imagination. The latter presents objects as nature has made them; he deals with descriptions of people and things as they are, and brings them vividly before the eyes of the reader; he draws, costumes, and colors his characters with the most scrupulous exactitude, puts in their mouths words which they might naturally have said, and holds his own opinion in reserve. This style was yours. From a cursory reading, one might have accused you of a certain apathetic disdain, which could see but little difference between a man and a lizard, between a sunset and the burning of a city; but upon a closer examination, from your brief words of enthusiasm quickly repressed, one could divine a deep sensitiveness and appreciation of goodness and beauty, held in restraint by a proud fear of any display of emotion.

This judgment, based upon your literary

work, was in accord with the instinctive judgment of my heart; and now that nothing is hidden from me, I know how correct and just it was. All sentimental exaggeration, all complaining and hypocritical pretence of virtue was repulsive to you, and deception was in your eyes the worst of crimes. This feeling caused you to be exceedingly temperate in the expression of thoughts of tenderness and love. You preferred silence to a lie, or to any exaggeration where sacred things were in question, even should you pass in the eyes of simpletons as insensible, harsh, and even a little cruel. I recognized all this, and I did not doubt for an instant the goodness of your heart. I never felt the least uncertainty as to your nobleness of spirit; this was sufficiently demonstrated to me by your haughty disdain of vulgarity, pretence, envy, and all moral deformities. From reading your writings so constantly and carefully, I acquired a knowledge of you, whom I had seen but once, as thorough as if I had been intimate with you for years. I had penetrated into the most secret recesses of your mind; I knew your principles, your aims, your motives, your sympathies and your antip-

athies, what you admired and what you disliked; in fact, your whole intellectual personality, and from all this I formed an idea of your character. Sometimes, as I read, I would be struck by a passage which was a sort of revelation to me; and, rising, I would go to the piano and play, as a species of commentary upon the thought you had expressed, a melody full of analogous color and sentiment, and which seemed to me to be a continuation of your idea in notes of triumph or melancholy, as the case might be. I enjoyed hearing in another branch of art the echo of your thought. Perhaps the connection between the two existed only in my imagination, and would not have been perceived by any other than myself, but at times it was certainly real. I know the fact now that my home is near the eternal source of inspiration, and I see it descend in luminous sparks upon the heads of the favored children of genius.

While I passed my time in reading such of your writings as I could procure, for a young girl's life is so circumscribed that the most simple action is a matter of difficulty to her, the season advanced, and the tips of

the trees were flushed with the orange tints of autumn; the leaves, one after another, fell from the branches, and all the efforts of the gardener to keep the walks and lawns unlittered with them were unavailing. Sometimes, when I walked in the garden under the chestnuts, the fall of a nut, striking upon my head or breaking into pieces at my feet, interrupted my reverie, and startled me in spite of myself. The delicate plants and the shrubs most sensitive to the cold were taken into the greenhouse. The birds flew about with that uneasy air which they have at the approach of winter, and in the evening they could be heard quarreling among the leafless boughs. At last, the opening of the social season was close at hand; the world of rank, wealth, and beauty was returning to Paris from all points of the compass. Dignified carriages, with coats of arms emblazoned upon the panels, were once more seen rolling toward the Arc de l'Etoile, to catch the last rays of sunshine. The Italiens was announced to reopen shortly, and the list of the singers, with the operas to be performed, was advertised in the papers. I rejoiced in the idea that this general return of the wanderers

would bring you back from Spain, and that, weary of climbing the sierras, you would be glad to appear at balls, receptions, and dinners, where there was a hope that I might meet you.

One day when I was going to the Bois de Boulogne with my mother, I saw you pass on horseback quite close to our carriage, but so rapidly that I had scarcely time to recognize you. This was the first time that I had seen you since your visits to the Convent des Oiseaux; the blood seemed to flow back to my heart, and my nerves tingled as with an electric shock. Pretending that it was cold, I lowered my veil to hide the change in my face, and silently drew back into the corner of the carriage. My mother closed the window, saying: "It is certainly not very warm; the mist is beginning to rise; we will return, unless you wish to continue the drive." I made a sign of acquiescence; I had seen what I had been watching for, and knew that you were in Paris.

We had taken a box at the Italiens for one night each week. It was a great delight to me to think of hearing singers whom I had seen so highly praised in print, and whom I had not as yet had a chance to hear; and, moreover,

my heart was gently stirred by another anticipation—what it was, there is no need to tell you.

Our night arrived. The opera was Somnambula, and Patti was to sing. Mamma had ordered for me a simple, pretty gown, suitable for my age—soft, white silk, with an overdress of tulle, caught here and there with knots of pearls and blue velvet. My hair was dressed with pearls and a bow of the velvet. As I looked at myself in the glass, while the maid was putting the finishing touches to her work, I thought: "Does he like blue? In Alfred de Musset's Caprice, Madame de Léry claims that it is an ugly color." Still, I could not help thinking that the blue looked well against my golden hair; if you had seen me, I think that you would have fallen in love with me. Clotilde, the maid, as she arranged my skirts and adjusted the bows upon my corsage, remarked that "Mademoiselle looked very pretty this evening."

The carriage deposited my mother and myself before the vestibule of the theater—my father was to join us later—and we commenced to mount the grand staircase, the steps of which

were covered with a red carpet. The atmosphere was warm and redolent of perfume; and women in full toilettes, still covered with cloaks, burnos, and scarfs, which they would hand later to the footmen, ascended the stairs, resting the tips of their fingers upon the arms of grave men in white cravats, whose lapels, covered with decorations, showed that, after the opera, they were due at some official or diplomatic reception. Slender, trim young men, with their hair parted in the middle, and dressed in the most irreproachable fashion, followed the various groups, bound to them by the smiles of the fair ladies.

There is, of course, nothing very novel in all this for you, and you could describe the picture better than I; but the spectacle was a new one for a little convent-bred girl, who was making her entrance into society. Life is always the same; it is a stage representation, where nothing changes except the spectators; but one who has not seen the piece before, is as interested in it as if it had been written expressly for him, and this was its first representation. I felt that I was looking well, and I was in the best of spirits. Several approving

looks were fixed upon me, and more than one woman, after a rapid glance which took me in from head to foot, turned away without having found anything to criticize, either in my person or my dress.

A secret presentiment warned me that I was to see you that evening, and this hope gave brilliancy to my eyes, and lent to my cheeks a color more vivid than usual. We were no sooner installed in our box, than opera-glasses from all sides were turned upon me. Mine was a new face, and all new faces are at once noticed at the Italiens, which is like a great drawing-room, where everyone is acquainted. My mother's presence disclosed my identity, and I saw that they were talking about me in many boxes, and the impression I had created was certainly favorable, for pleasant smiles accompanied the whispered words. It disturbed me a little to be the cynosure of all eyes, and, as I was wearing a low bodice for the first time, I felt my shoulders shiver beneath the gauze which covered them with its semi-transparency. But when the curtain rose, all faces were turned toward the stage, and my embarrassment was at an end.

The appearance of the beautiful auditorium, with its gildings, its lights, and its white caryatides, and the profusion of diamonds and flowers, certainly filled me with astonishment and admiration; and Bellini's music, executed by artists of the first order, carried me away into an enchanted world; but still the real interest of the evening for me was elsewhere. While my ears were listening to the sweet melodies of the Sicilian maëstro, my eyes were furtively scrutinizing each box, running over the balcony, and searching the rows of orchestra-chairs, in order to discover you. You did not arrive until toward the end of the first act; and when the curtain fell, you made a half circuit of the theater, looking rather bored as you absently swept your glance over the boxes, without fixing your glass upon any. Your six months in Spain had bronzed your complexion, and there was a certain expression upon your face as if you regretted the country you had just left. My heart beat violently while you were making this rapid inspection, and for an instant I thought that your eyes had rested upon me; but I was mistaken. I saw you leave your place, and appear a few minutes after in

a box opposite ours, which was occupied by a pretty woman, very elegantly dressed; her black hair glistened with the lustre of satin, and her gown of pale pink was scarcely to be distinguished from the flesh tints of her neck and arms. Diamonds sparkled in her hair, in her ears, and wherever it was possible for them to be placed. Upon the velvet-covered edge of her box, beside her opera-glass, was placed a large bouquet of camelias and Parma violets. At the back of the box, in the shadow, could be distinguished an old, stout, bald personage, the lapel of whose coat was half-covered by the order of a foreign court. The lady welcomed you with evident pleasure, and you answered her calmly and indifferently, without appearing in the least flattered by her more than friendly demonstrations. My disappointment at not being noticed by you was compensated for by the joy of feeling that you did not love this woman with the bold eyes, the enticing smile, and the striking toilette.

After a few minutes, as the musicians were beginning to tune their instruments for the second act, you took leave of the bediamonded lady and the decorated old gentleman, and

returned to your place. You did not turn your head again during the performance, and I secretly felt a little impatient with you. I was surprised that you did not divine that a young girl in white and blue was longing to be noticed by the lord whom she had chosen in her heart. For such a long time I had looked forward to being in the same place with you! My desire was realized, and you did not even suspect my presence! It seemed to me that you might have felt a sympathetic current, turned, sought slowly in the auditorium for the reason of the unknown emotion, allowed your gaze to rest upon our box, clasped your hand upon your heart, and fallen into an ecstacy of admiration. A hero of romance would not have failed to do so; but then, you were not a hero of romance.

My father, who had been detained at a large dinner, did not arrive until the middle of the second act. He at once perceived you in the orchestra, and remarked: "There is Guy de Malivert; I did not know that he had returned from Spain. His journey will give us, probably, a plea for bull-fights in the *Revue;* Guy is something of a barbarian, you know." I

liked to hear your name spoken by my father's lips, for it proved that you were not unknown to my family; an introduction was possible, even easy, and this thought consoled me a little for my lack of success that evening. The performance was finished without any other incident than the showers of bouquets, the recalls, and the ovation given to Patti. While we were waiting in the vestibule for the footman to announce our carriage, I saw you pass with a friend, and draw a cigar from a handsome Manilla case. The desire to smoke rendered you insensible to the exhibition of beauty, and, it must be confessed, of ugliness also, displayed upon the lower steps of the staircase. You made your way, somewhat cavalierly, amidst the mass of millinery, and you soon gained the door with your companion, who had followed in the pathway opened by you.

I returned home both happy and disappointed, and after trying absently some of the airs of La Somnambula upon the piano, as if to prolong the delights of the evening, I went to bed to dream of you.

## IX.

WHEN we have cherished for a long time the memory of a person in our hearts, and are suddenly confronted with his living, breathing image, we often find that our imagination has worked as a painter works upon a portrait in the absence of the original, softening the defects, blending the tints, improving the lines, and unconsciously shaping the face into an ideal of his own fancy. I had not seen you for more than three years, but upon my heart your features were indelibly engraven. I found that my memory had not played me false, but you yourself had changed somewhat. Your face had become firmer, stronger, and the warmth of the sun had given your complexion a richer, deeper color. You were no longer a boy, and you had that air of calm authority and conscious strength which, perhaps, is more fascinating to women than mere beauty of feature. Still, I guarded none the less closely in my heart the first slight but ineffaceable sketch of the being who was destined to exercise so

great an influence over me, as one preserves an old-fashioned miniature of a boy beside the portrait of the man as he is. My dreams had not deceived me, and when I saw you again, I was not obliged to despoil you of a mantle of fancied perfections.

I thought of all this as I lay in bed watching the flickering reflection of the night-lamp upon the blue roses of the carpet, and awaiting the advent of sleep, which did not descend upon my eyelids until toward morning, and was then an uneasy slumber, full of disconnected dreams and indistinct strains of melody.

A few weeks afterward, we received an invitation to a grand ball to be given by the Duchess de C——. Her first ball is an important matter to a young girl, and it became all the more interesting to me because it was probable that you would be present, as the Duchess was one of your most intimate friends. Balls are our battles, which lead us to victory or defeat; there a young girl, who has just emerged from the shades of school life, sparkles with her purest lustre. For a short space of time she is allowed, under pretext of dancing, a sort of relative liberty, and a ball is to her like the corridors of

an opera-house where the masqueraders remove their masks. An invitation to dance a quadrille or a mazurka permits a young man to approach her and address a few words to her between the figures of the dance; but very often the little card upon which she notes down her engagements does not contain the name she most desired to see there.

My toilette occupied much of my attention; a ball-dress is a poem, and that of a young girl is full of puzzling difficulties. It must be simple, but rich at the same time, qualities which it is no easy matter to combine; the white muslin gown, which the novelists write of, would not be proper at all. After much hesitation, I decided upon a dress of gauze, striped with silver, caught with sprays of myositis, whose color harmonized beautifully with the necklace of turquoises which my father had chosen for me at Janisset's; turquoise pins, wrought in imitation of the flower with which my dress was adorned, were caught here and there in my hair. Thus fortified, I felt capable of appearing without too much disadvantage among the celebrated beauties and their splendid toilettes. Truly, for a simple

daughter of the earth, I looked exceedingly well.

The Duchess de C—— lived in one of those immense mansions in the Faubourg Saint-Germain which were built to suit the grandeur of by-gone days, and which are so unfitted to modern every-day life; only in the crowded brilliancy of some grand entertainment do they recover anything of their former gayety and animation. Looking at it from the outside, one would never suspect the extent of this almost princely residence; a high wall between two houses, with a monumental porte-cochère, surmounted by a tablet of green marble, bearing, in letters of gold, the inscription, *Hôtel de C——*, was all that could be seen from the street. A long avenue of old lindens, trimmed so as to form an arch, in the old French fashion, and now denuded of their leaves, led to an immense court-yard, at the end of which was the house, built in the Louis Quatorze style, and recalling, with its lofty windows, its twisted pilasters, and the numerous peaks of its roof, the architecture of Versailles. A red and white awning, supported by posts of carved wood, was spread before the richly carpeted

steps. I had time to examine all these details in the light of the strings of Japanese lanterns; for, although the invitations had been strictly limited, the crowd was so great that we had to wait in line, as at a Court reception. Our carriage finally reached the door, and we alighted and handed our wraps to our footman. Just outside the swinging glass doors stood a gigantic porter, of the most imposing mien. Within the vestibule, we passed between two rows of footmen in powdered hair and gorgeous liveries, all tall, motionless, and grave; they might have passed for the caryatides of lackeydom. They seemed to appreciate the honor of being servants in such a house. The staircase, almost as spacious in itself as a modern palazzino, was lined on both sides with enormous camellias. On each landing, a large mirror permitted the women to repair those little disarrangements which a wrap, no matter how light it may be, causes in a ball costume. The scene was brilliantly illuminated by a chandelier which was suspended by gilded chains from the dome of the cupola, where, upon a background of azure, interspersed with clouds, the brush of a Lebrun or a Mignard had de-

picted a mythological allegory in the taste of the time.

In the spaces between the windows were landscapes of an oblong shape, severe in style and dusky in coloring, that were probably the work of Poussin, or at least of Gaspard Dughet. Such, at all events, was the opinion of a celebrated painter who ascended the stairs by our side, and who, with the aid of his glasses, was examining everything with the greatest interest. At each turning, upon pedestals which formed the angles of the balustrade, a marvel of intricate iron-work, marble statues by Lepautre and Théodon upheld candelabra, which served to increase the light shed from the chandelier, and lent additional brilliancy to the scene.

At the door of the antechamber, the walls of which were paneled in old oak and hung with Gobelin tapestry after designs by Oudry, stood an usher, dressed in black, with a silver chain about his neck, who, in a more or less ringing voice, according to the importance of the personage, announced the names of the guests.

The Duke—tall, thin, and supple, reminding

one of a greyhound of pure blood—looked the high-bred gentleman he was, and, despite his age, he still preserved traces of his youthful beauty. He would never have been taken in the street for anything but what he was. Standing a few steps from the entrance, he received his guests with a gracious word, a shake of the hand, a bow, or a smile, and with such unerring knowledge of what was due to each, and a tact so perfect that all were satisfied, and each one believed himself specially favored. He saluted my mother with a commingling of respect and friendship, and, as it was the first time that he had seen me, he addressed to me a little speech, half paternal, half gallant—a sort of madrigal, full of old-fashioned, gentle courtesy.

Near the fire-place stood the Duchess, rouged with a careless contempt of all illusion; wearing an evident wig, and displaying upon her bony neck, which was fearlessly exposed above a low-cut bodice, diamonds that were world-renowned. She was exceedingly intelligent and witty, and beneath her darkened brows her eyes glowed still with extraordinary fire. She was dressed in a gown of brocaded velvet,

trimmed with priceless point-lace, and with a spray of diamonds upon the corsage. Now and then, while conversing with the groups who had advanced to pay her their respects, she would fan herself abstractedly with a large fan, painted by Watteau. Her manners were gracious and dignified—those of a woman whose birth and breeding were unquestioned. She exchanged a few words with my mother, who presented me to her, and, as I bent my head, she brushed my forehead with her cold lips, and said: "Enjoy yourself, my dear, and do not miss a single dance."

This ceremony accomplished, we entered the next room, beyond which was the dancing-hall. Against the red damask walls were hung, in magnificent frames of the time in which the pictures were painted, family portraits, which had been placed there through no wish to display a long line of ancestors, but simply because they were masterpieces of art. There were pictures by Clouet, Porbus, Van Dyck, Philippe de Champagne, and Largillière, all worthy to adorn the walls of a national gallery. What pleased me the most, amidst all the luxury, was, that nothing seemed of recent date.

The frescoes, the gilding, the draperies, and the coverings of the furniture, without being exactly faded, were subdued in tint, and did not offend the eyes with the blatant glitter of newness. You felt that the wealth was immemorial, and that things had always been so. The dancing-hall was of dimensions rarely seen even in palaces. Numerous branched candlesticks and stands of lights, placed in the interstices of the windows, gave the effect, with their millions of candles, of a brilliant conflagration, through which the frescoes of the walls, garlands of nymphs and cupids, appeared as if seen through a pinkish mist. Despite the multitude of blazing lights, the room was so vast that there was plenty of air, and no one found any difficulty in breathing.

The orchestra was stationed in a sort of gallery at the end of the hall, amidst a mass of rare plants. Upon the rows of velvet sofas placed in a semi-circle about the room, sat long lines of women, remarkable for their jewels, if not for their beauty, although some of them were very pretty. The whole effect was magnificent. We had entered during an interval of the dancing, and when I found myself

seated beside my mother upon one of the sofas, I regarded, with a mingling of curiosity and astonishment, this spectacle, which was something so new to me. The men, after escorting their partners back to their places, promenaded up and down the middle of the room, glancing to right and left, and passing the women in a sort of review, before making their choice. These gentlemen were chiefly the younger guests, as men who have reached a certain age no longer care for dancing. There were young attachés of embassies, secretaries of legation, members of the Council of State *in prospectu;* future diplomats, still beardless; sportsmen in embryo, dreaming of a well-stocked stable; dandies, whose budding moustaches were only a faint down; eldest sons, displaying the precocious assurance of a great name and a great fortune. Amidst all this display of youth were a few grave personages, covered with decorations, whose polished craniums shone like ivory beneath the gas-jets, or were hidden beneath wigs too black or too blonde. Stopping now and then, they would exchange a few polite words with the dowagers who were contemporaries of their youth, and

then, turning away, would scrutinize, like disinterested connoisseurs, the feminine seraglio displayed before their spectacled eyes. The first notes of the orchestra made them hurry away, as fast as their gouty feet could carry them, to more quiet rooms, where there were tables, lighted by chandeliers, covered with broad, green shades, at which they could play bouillotte or écarté.

As you may well imagine, I did not lack invitations to dance. A young Hungarian, in the costume of a Magnate, all befrogged and embroidered, and sparkling with buttons of precious stones, bowed gracefully before me, and begged the honor of my hand for a mazurka. His features were regular, his complexion romantically pale, his eyes large, dark, and gleaming, and his moustache was waxed fiercely into two sharp points. An Englishman of twenty-two or three years, who resembled Lord Byron except that he was not lame, an attaché of one of the northern courts, and several others inscribed their names upon my card. Although the old dancing-master of the convent had declared me one of his best pupils, and praised my grace, lightness, and appreciа-

tion of time, I was not, I must confess, entirely at my ease. I felt, as the newspapers say, the emotion inseparable from a début. It seemed to me, as is frequently the case with timid people, that all eyes were fixed upon me. Fortunately, my Hungarian was an excellent dancer; he supported my first steps, and soon, carried away by the music and fascinated by the motion, I became more confident, and allowed myself to be borne into the whirl of floating skirts with a sort of nervous delight; but still I did not forget you, my constant thought, and the motive for which I had come to the ball. As I passed near the doors, with a rapid glance I tried to discover you in the neighboring rooms; and at last I perceived you, standing in the embrasure of one of the windows, talking to a person with a bronzed face, a long nose, and a heavy black beard, wearing a red fez and a Nizam uniform, with the order of Medjidieh upon his breast—some bey or pacha. When the circle of the dance brought me round again, you were still there talking animatedly to the placidly serene Turk, and you did not deign to cast a glance at the pretty faces which, flushed with the exercise, whirled by you. I did not

lose all hope, however, and for the moment I was satisfied with the knowledge that you were there; besides, the evening was still young, and some chance might yet throw us together.

My partner led me back to my place, and again the men began to circle about the open space in front of the sofas. You took a few steps with your Turk amidst the moving crowd, examining the women and the toilettes, but with the same look you would have bestowed upon pictures and statues. Now and then you addressed a remark to your friend, the pacha, who smiled gravely in his beard. I saw all this through the sticks of my fan, which, I acknowledge, I lowered when you approached the place where we were seated. My heart throbbed violently, and I felt my face become suffused with blushes. It was impossible, this time, that I should escape your notice, for you were walking as close to the rows of seats as the gorgeous fringe of gauze, lace, and silk would permit you; but, as misfortune would have it, just at that moment two or three friends of my mother's stopped just in front of us to pay us their respects. Their black coats formed a screen which completely hid

me. You were forced to walk around the group, and you did not perceive me, although I had leaned a little forward in the hope that you would do so. But you could not divine that those dress-coats, bending respectfully forward, concealed a pretty young girl, whose only thought was of you. I saw you leave the dancing-hall at the other end of the room, the Turk's red cap serving as a beacon to prevent me from losing you amidst the multitude of black coats, which are alike the festal and mourning garments of the men of to-day. All my pleasure was gone, and I felt utterly discouraged. Destiny, with tantalizing irony, seemed to take pleasure in keeping us apart. I fulfilled the engagements I had made, and then, under the pretext of fatigue, refused all other invitations. The ball had lost its charm; the dresses seemed to me shabby, and the lights dim. My father, who had been playing cards and had lost a hundred louis to an old general, came to escort us through the apartments and show us the conservatory, which was said to be very wonderful. And, indeed, nothing could have been more magnificent. One might easily have imagined oneself in a

virgin forest, there were so many banana-trees, orange-trees, palms, and tropical plants flourishing vigorously in the warm atmosphere, saturated with exotic perfumes. At the end of the conservatory was a white marble naïade emptying her urn into a gigantic South Sea shell, embedded in moss and water-plants. There I saw you once more; you were with your sister, but it was impossible for us to meet, for we were both walking in the same direction along the green-edged path of yellow sand which wound amidst the masses of plants, flowers, and verdure.

We wandered for awhile through the various rooms, where it was much easier to move about, now that the exhausted dancers had sought the supper-table, which was spread with all imaginable dainties in a gallery, paneled with ebony and gold, and adorned with pictures by Desportes, representing flowers, fruits, and game of superb coloring, which the progress of time had only enriched. Although at the time I saw all these details with an absent eye, they were indelibly impressed upon my memory, and I remember them still in that world where mortal life seems only the shadow

of a dream. They are connected with those undying sentiments which have forced me to come back to the earth. My return home was as sad as my start for the ball had been joyful, and I was forced to attribute my dejection to a slight headache. As I exchanged the ball costume, which had been of no avail, for my night robes, I thought, with a sigh: "Why did not he invite me to dance, as well as that Hungarian, that Englishman, and those other gentlemen for whom I cared nothing? It would have been very simple, and the most natural thing in the world. But everybody looked at me, except the one being whose attention I desired. Ah! my love has no luck." I retired to bed and wet my pillow with my tears.

Here ended Spirite's first communication. For a long time the lamp had been extinct, for lack of oil, but Malivert, like somnambulists who need no external light, had continued to write; in utter unconsciousness on his part, page was added to page. Suddenly, the influence which guided his hand ceased, and his own ideas, the flow of which had been suspended to make way for those of Spirite, returned

to him. The first streaks of daylight were filtering through the closed shutters. He threw them open, and in the bleak light of the winter morning he saw strewn upon his table a quantity of sheets covered with sentences written in a rapid, feverish hand—his work of the night. Although he had written them himself, he was in ignorance of the meaning they conveyed. There is no need to relate with what eager curiosity, with what deep emotion, he read the pure, artless confession of the adorable young soul he had so innocently tortured. This tardy avowal of love, coming from the other world and sighed forth by a spirit, filled him with despairing regret and impotent anger against himself. How could he have been so stupid, so blind, as to pass close to happiness, without perceiving it? He finally became calm, however, and happening to raise his eyes to the Venetian mirror, he saw the reflection of Spirite smiling down upon him.

## X.

IT is a strange sensation to be told of a happiness that might have been yours, but which you never perceived, and missed by your own fault. Under no circumstances is the regret for what is irreparable more bitter; you would like to lead your life over again; you see how you ought to have behaved, and in the new light you have gained your perspicacity becomes astonishing; but life can not be turned back like an hour-glass. The sands once fallen will never rise again.

It was to no purpose that Guy de Malivert reproached himself for not having had the wit to discover the charming girl, who was not imprisoned in a harem of Constantinople, nor hidden behind the iron gratings of a convent of Italy or Spain, nor watched like Rosina by a jealous guardian, but who moved in the same ranks of society that he did, whom he could see every day, and from whom he was separated by no obstacle whatever. She loved

him; he could have asked for her hand, obtained it, and enjoyed the supreme and rare felicity of being united, in this world, to the soul made for his soul. From the manner in which he worshiped the spirit, he understood with what passionate love the woman would have inspired him. But it was not long before his thoughts took another course, and he ceased to blame himself and to rail against fate. After all, what had he lost, since Spirite had preserved her love beyond the tomb, and had drawn herself from the depths of the infinite to descend to the sphere inhabited by him? Was not the love he felt more noble, more poetical, more ethereal, more like eternal love, thus freed, as it was, from all earthly contact, and having for its object a beauty idealized by death? Did not the most perfect human union have its moments of weariness, satiety, and irksomeness? The eyes most blinded by passion, at the end of a few years, are sure to witness the decay of the charms once adored; the soul is less visible through the faded, wrinkled flesh, and love in amaze seeks in vain its lost idol.

These reflections and the ordinary course of

every-day life with its exactions, from which not even the most enthusiastic dreamers can emancipate themselves, occupied the time until the evening, which Malivert had impatiently awaited, arrived. When he was alone in his study, and, as on the previous evening, seated at the table in the position of writing, the little, white, slender, blue-veined hand appeared again and motioned him to take the pen. He obeyed, and his fingers began to move of themselves, without any dictation from his brain. For his thoughts, were substituted those of Spirite.

DICTATED BY SPIRITE.

I will not weary you in a posthumous fashion by relating to you all the disappointments I had to undergo. One day, however, a great joy came to me, and I thought that malicious fate, which had seemed to delight in hiding me from your eyes, was about to cease its willfulness. We were invited to dine the following Saturday with Monsieur de L——. This in itself would have been a matter of no importance to me, had I not learned during the week, through Baron de Féroë, who came occasionally

to the house, that you were to be one of the guests of this half-worldly, half-literary gathering; for it was Monsieur de L——'s special delight to entertain artists and authors. He was a man of taste, a connoisseur in books and pictures, who had a faultlessly chosen library and picture-gallery. You were in the habit of going sometimes to his receptions, like many authors already celebrated, or on the way to become so. Monsieur de L—— prided himself on his ability to discover genius; and he was not one of those who believe only in people whose reputations are already made. In my childish excitement and delight, I thought: "At last I hold this fugitive will o' the wisp, and this time he can not escape; when we are seated at table, perhaps side by side, in the full blaze of fifty candles, no matter how absent-minded he may be, he can not fail to notice me—unless there should be between us a basket of flowers, or a tall centre-piece, which would hide me."

The days which still separated me from the happy Saturday appeared of endless duration—as long as the lesson-hours at the convent. They passed at last, however, and all three of

us—my father, my mother, and myself—arrived at Monsieur de L——'s about a quarter of an hour before the time fixed for the dinner. The guests were scattered about the drawing-room, chatting in groups, wandering about, looking at the pictures, opening the books lying upon the table, or retailing theatrical gossip to two or three women seated on a divan beside the mistress of the house. Among them were a few illustrious writers, whom my father pointed out to me, and whose appearance did not seem to me to be at all in consonance with the character of their work. You were the only one of the guests who had not arrived, and Monsieur de L—— was beginning to complain of your want of punctuality, when a tall lackey entered, bearing upon a silver waiter a telegram from you, sent from Chantilly, and containing these sentences, worded in electric style: "Missed the train. Do not wait for me. In despair."

The disappointment was cruel. For a whole week I had been nursing a hope, which vanished just as it was about to be fulfilled. I had great difficulty in concealing the misery which overwhelmed me, and the roses with which

excitement had painted my cheeks, faded away. Fortunately, the doors of the dining-room were immediately thrown open, and the butler announced that "Madame was served." The general movement prevented my emotion being observed. When everyone was seated, there was an empty place at my right; and that it had been intended for you was demonstrated to me by the sight of your name, written in a round, handsome hand, upon a card bordered with arabesques in brilliant colors, which was placed near the row of glasses. So the irony of destiny was complete. Had it not been for that wretched mischance of the train, I should have had you near me during the whole dinner, and your hand might have touched mine in those thousand little courtesies which the least gallant man is forced to show a woman at table. A few commonplace words, the usual prelude to all conversations, would have been exchanged between us, and then, the ice once broken, our intercourse would have become more intimate, and before long you would have understood the feeling in my heart. Perhaps I would not have displeased you; and, although you had just arrived from Spain, you might

possibly have pardoned the rosy fairness of my complexion and the pale gold of my hair. If you had come to that dinner, it would surely have made a vast difference in both your life and mine. You would not have remained a bachelor, and I should have lived, and not been reduced to make my confessions to you from beyond the tomb. The love which you feel for me as a spirit warrants me in believing, without manifesting too much conceit, that you would not have proved insensible to my terrestrial charms; but that was not to be. That unoccupied seat, which isolated me from the other guests, seemed to me symbolic of my fate; it foretold to me fruitless expectations and solitude in the midst of the crowd. And the sinister prediction was only too completely fulfilled.

My neighbor on the left was, I heard afterward, a member of the Academy, and very amiable, in spite of his learning. He tried many times to make me speak, but I responded only in monosyllables, and, moreover, in monosyllables so ill-suited to his questions, that the poor man took me for an idiot, and forsook me to converse with the lady on his other side.

I scarcely touched my lips to the various dishes that were set before me; my heart felt so heavy that I could not eat. The dinner was over at last, and we returned to the drawing-room. There was a perfect hum of conversation—like seeking like—in all sorts of discussions. There was a group of three or four near enough the place where I was sitting to permit me to hear what was said, and your name, spoken by Monsieur d'Aversac, attracted my attention. "That queer Malivert," d'Aversac was saying, "cares for no one but that pacha, and the pacha is equally devoted to him; they are never apart. Mohammed, Mustapha, or whatever his name is, wants to carry him off to Egypt. He talks of offering him a steamer to take him to the first cataracts; but Guy, who is as barbarous as the Turk is civilized, would prefer a canagia, as being more picturesque. The plan pleases Guy, as he says Paris is too cold. He would, on the whole, like to winter in Cairo, and continue there his studies upon Arabian architecture which he begun at the Alhambra; but, if he does go, I am afraid that we shall never see him again, and that he will embrace Islamism, like Hassan, the hero of Namouna."

"He is quite capable of it," answered one of the young men in the group; "he has never been very fond of western civilization."

"Oh, pshaw!" said another; "when he has worn a few odd costumes, taken a dozen vapor baths, bought of the Djellabs one or two slaves and sold them again at a loss, climbed the pyramids, and sketched the flat-nosed profile of the sphinx, he will be glad enough to return to the asphalt of the boulevards, which, after all, is the only place in the universe where life is worth living."

This conversation worried me greatly. You were going away. For how long? How could I find out? Would I be lucky enough to meet you before your departure, so that at least you might carry my image away with you? I no longer dared to believe in any such happiness, after so many baffled hopes.

On my return home I first quieted the fears of my mother, who, from my pallor, thought me ill, as of course she could not suspect what was passing in my mind, and then went to my room to think over the situation. I wondered if the stubbornness with which circumstances had contrived to separate us, was not a secret

warning of destiny which it would be dangerous not to obey. Perhaps you would be fatal to me, and I was wrong to persist in my attempts to meet you. My reason alone spoke thus, for my heart rejected the idea, and longed to run all risks for the sake of its love. I felt myself to be irrevocably attached to you, and the bond, so frail in appearance, was stronger than a chain of diamonds. Unfortunately, it bound me alone. "How wretched is woman's lot!" I thought. "Condemned, as she is, to waiting, inaction, silence, she can not, without being immodest, manifest her affection; she must submit to the love which she inspires, and never declare that which she feels. From the time my heart awoke, one sentiment alone has reigned there, a sentiment pure, absolute, eternal, and the being who is the object of it will, perhaps, forever remain in ignorance of the fact. How can I make him realize that a young girl, whom he would doubtless love if he could suspect her secret, lives and breathes only for him?"

For a moment I thought of writing you one of those letters that they say an author sometimes receives, in which, under the mask of

admiration for his literary ability, sentiments of another nature are allowed to appear, and a non-compromising rendezvous in some public place is hinted at; but my womanly delicacy revolted against employing such means, and I was afraid that you would take me for a blue-stocking who hoped to make use of your influence to have an article accepted by the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

D'Aversac had spoken the truth. The following week you left for Cairo with your friend, the pacha. Your departure destroyed all hope of our meeting for an indefinite period, and inspired me with a melancholy which I found it almost impossible to hide. All interest in life was gone. I no longer cared to please, and when I went into society, I left the choice of my dress entirely to my maid. What mattered it whether I was pretty or not, since you were not there to see? Nevertheless, I looked attractive enough to be surrounded, like Penelope, with a little court of suitors. Gradually, our house, which had previously been frequented chiefly by friends of my father—sedate, elderly men—became the resort of younger faces. Regularly, on our reception

days, appeared handsome dandies, without a hair out of place, who had devoted unparalleled attention to the tying of their cravats, and who honored me with passionate, appealing glances. Some, during the pauses in the dances—for sometimes we had an improvised dance at our receptions—uttered deep sighs, which I, without being in the slightest degree touched, attributed to the scantness of their breath. Some, more bold than the rest, hazarded moral and poetical reflections upon the happiness of a well-assorted union, and pretended that they were made expressly for the felicity of married life. How perfect they all were in their dress, their manners, and their delicate thoughtfulness! The perfume of their hair came from Houbigant's, and their evening clothes were built by Renard. What more could the most romantic and exacting imagination demand? And so these exquisite young men were filled with artless surprise at the slight impression they produced upon me.

There were some serious suitors among them. My hand was more than once asked of my parents; but, when I was consulted, I always answered in the negative, finding excellent

reasons for my refusal. My father and mother never attempted to influence me; I was so young that there was no need of urging an immediate marriage, which might be repented later. One day, my mother, believing that I had formed some secret attachment, questioned me, and I was on the point of acknowledging all to her, but a feeling of unconquerable diffidence prevented me doing so. The love which I alone felt, and which you knew nothing of, seemed to me a secret which I ought not to betray without your consent. It was not mine alone, but half yours. I therefore kept silence, and, leaving all else out of the question, how could I confess, even to the most indulgent of mothers, this foolish love—for so it would appear to her—which had its origin in a childish impression formed in the parlor of a convent, which had been obstinately cherished in my heart, and which there was nothing from a human point of view to justify? If I had spoken, my mother, for there was nothing culpable or impossible in my choice, would have doubtless attempted to bring us together, and would have found means to make you declare yourself by one of those subterfuges

which, on such occasions, the most honest and truthful women in the world know how to employ. But any such proceeding shocked my idea of maidenly modesty. I did not wish any interference between you and me. You must notice me and divine my thoughts of your own accord. Under such conditions only could I be happy, and forgive myself for being the first to love; I could not have supported the thought without some such consolation and excuse. It was neither pride nor coquetry that demanded it, but pure, womanly dignity.

Time passed, and you returned from Egypt. People began to speak of your attentions to Madame d'Ymbercourt, and to declare that you were very much in love with her. I became alarmed, and wanted to see my rival, and one night she was pointed out to me in her box at the Italiens. I tried to judge her impartially, and came to the conclusion that she was beautiful, but that her beauty was devoid of either charm or delicacy, like the copy of an ancient statue made by an ordinary sculptor. She was a perfect type of the ideal of the commonplace, and I was surprised that she should possess any attraction for you. Her regular feat-

ures were devoid of any individual expression, any original grace, any unexpected charm. As she appeared one day, so she would always appear. In spite of all that was said, I was too proud to be jealous of such a woman. But the rumors of your approaching marriage became more extended. As bad news always reaches the ears of those most interested, I was kept informed of everything in connection with you and Madame d'Ymbercourt. One said that the first bans had been published, and another that the exact day had been fixed for the ceremony. I had no means to ascertain how true or false these reports might be, but as everyone considered that the matter had been arranged, and that it was most suitable in all respects, I was forced to believe it also. Still, the secret voice of my heart declared that you did not love Madame d'Ymbercourt. Loveless marriages are often made for reasons of convenience: to have an establishment, to obtain a recognized position in the world, or because of the need of domestic peace one feels after the dissipations and excitements of youth. I sunk into profound despair. I saw my life ended, and the pure dreams I had cherished

so long vanished forever. I no longer had the right even to hold you in the most secret recesses of my heart, for as, in the sight of God and man, you belonged to another, the thought of you, hitherto innocent, would, under these circumstances, become culpable, and there had been nothing in my girlish love which my guardian angel need have blushed for. Once, I saw you in the park riding beside Madame d'Ymbercourt's barouche, but I drew back into the corner of the carriage, taking as much care to hide from you as I had once taken to be seen by you. This fleeting vision was the last.

I, was scarcely seventeen. What was to become of me? How could I live out an existence thus ruined in the very beginning? Must I trust to my parents' wisdom and accept a husband of their choosing? That is what, under such circumstances, many young girls, separated, like me, by untoward accidents from the object of their heart's desire, have consented to do. But such a proceeding seemed to me inconstant and disloyal. As my first and only thought of love had been for you, I could never belong to anyone but you, and any other union appeared to me a sort of crime. My

heart had only one page; upon that page you had unwittingly written your name, and no other should replace it. Your marriage would not excuse infidelity on my part. You were unconscious of my love, and free, but I was bound. The idea of being the wife of another inspired me with unconquerable horror, and, after I had refused many suitors, knowing the position of an unmarried woman in society to be very disagreeable, I determined to leave the world and become a nun. God alone could shield my grief, and perhaps console it.

## XI.

I THEREFORE entered, as a novice, the convent of the Sisters of Mercy, in spite of the remonstrances and entreaties of my parents; what they said touched me deeply, but did not shake my resolution. However firm one's determination may be, the moment of final separation is a terrible one. A grating at the end of a long passage marks the boundary between the world and the cloister. To the threshold of this grating, which no profane foot must cross, the family can accompany the maiden who is to devote herself to God. After the last embraces and kisses, witnessed impassively by the sombre, veiled figures of the nuns behind the grating, the door is opened just enough to admit of the passage of the novice, whom shadowy arms seem to draw within, and closed again with an iron clang, which reëchoes in the silence of the corridors like the hollow rumblings of thunder. The sound of the closing of a coffin-lid is not more mournful—strikes no more painfully upon the heart. I felt my

cheeks paling, and an icy chill enfolded me. I had taken my first step out of the world, which henceforth would be a closed book for me. I had entered that cold region where passions are extinguished, where memories are effaced, and where news from outside never enters. Nothing exists therein except the thought of God, which is deemed sufficient to fill the frightful void and the silence which reigns there, as profound as that of the tomb. I can speak of all this now that I am dead.

My religion, although sincere and fervent, did not reach the point of mystical exaltation. A human motive, rather than an imperious call of duty, had forced me to seek peace in the shadows of the cloister. My heart was shipwrecked, broken upon a hidden rock, and the drama of my life, which no one was aware of, had ended tragically. In the beginning, I felt what is known among those who have given up their lives to religion, as the last temptations of the flesh, the struggle of the world to recapture its prey—a weariness, a hopelessness, a regret, a vague discouragement; but these feelings soon ceased to trouble me. The unending round of prayers and religious exer-

cises, the regularity of the life, and the monotony of rules, calculated to conquer all rebellious feelings of soul and body, turned toward heaven thoughts which persisted in dwelling too much upon the world. Your image lived ever in my heart, but I forced myself to turn toward God the love I felt for you.

The convent of the Sisters of Mercy is not one of those romantic cloisters such as society women imagine as a shelter from the pangs of disappointed love. There are no rounded arches, no columns festooned with ivy, no ray of the moon penetrating through a broken rose-window, and casting its light upon the inscription of a tomb; no chapel, with stained-glass windows, slender pillars, and arches open to the sky, which is such an excellent subject for a stage picture. The religious sentiment which seeks to uphold Christianity by its picturesque and poetical side, would find here no theme for descriptions in the style of Chateaubriand. The building is modern, and there is not one obscure corner on which to found a legend. There is nothing to please the eye; no ornament, no artistic embellishment, no pictures, no statues; nothing but rigid, severe

lines. A glaring light illumines the white ceilings and walls of the long corridors, pierced at regular intervals by the doors of the cells. Everything is gloomy and severe, with no attention paid to beauty, and no appeal to the senses through form or color. The plainness and ugliness of the architecture have the advantage of offering no distractions to minds which should be absorbed in thoughts of God. The windows, placed very high in the walls, are barred with iron, and through the openings nothing can be seen except patches of sky, blue or gray as the case may be. It is like being within a fortress raised against the temptations of the world. That the walls are solid is sufficient; beauty would be superfluous.

About half of the chapel is open to the devotions of the outside public. A large grating, stretching from the floor to the roof, and hung with thick green curtains, interposes, like the portcullis of a walled town, between the body of the church and the choir reserved for the nuns. Wooden stalls, with plain mouldings, worn shiny by friction, are arranged on each side of the choir. At the back are placed three

chairs for the mother superior and her two assistants. Here, to listen to the divine office, came the sisters, with lowered veils and long, trailing black robes, upon which was stitched a broad band of white stuff, like the cross on a funeral-pall, with the arms cut off. From the latticed gallery, where the novices were, I beheld them bow to the superior and to the altar, kneel, prostrate themselves, and disappear in their stalls. At the elevation of the Host, the curtains were partially drawn aside, to enable them to see the priest consummating the holy sacrifice at the altar placed opposite the choir. The fervor of the worship gratified me, and strengthened my resolution to break with the world, to which it was not yet too late to return. In that atmosphere of ecstacy and incense, with the quivering lights of the candles casting their pale rays upon the prostrate forms, my soul seemed to push forth wings and to rise higher and higher toward the ethereal regions. The ceiling of the chapel was painted blue and gold, and, as in an opening of the heavens, I fancied I could see, over the edge of a luminous cloud, angels leaning smilingly toward me and beckoning me to come to them,

and I no longer perceived the coarse tints of the frescoing, the poor taste of the chandelier, and the ugliness of the black-framed pictures.

The time to pronounce my vows drew near, and I was overwhelmed with those words of flattering encouragement, those delicate attentions, those mystical caresses, those prophecies of perfect felicity which they lavish in convents upon novices about to consummate the sacrifice and consecrate themselves forever to the Lord. I did not need such support, and I was ready to walk to the altar with a firm step. Forced, as I believed, to renounce you, there was in the world nothing that I regretted, except the love of my parents, and my determination to forsake it forever was unalterable.

The probationary period was at last ended, and the solemn day arrived. The convent, usually so peaceful, was full of excitement, suppressed by the severe monastic discipline. The nuns moved about the corridors, forgetting at times the phantom-like step which the regulations commend, for the taking of the veil is a great event. A new lamb is to join the fold, and the whole flock is in a state of excitement. The worldly garments in which the novice is

arrayed for the last time, are a subject of curiosity, delight, and astonishment. The satin, lace, pearls, and ornaments, intended to represent the pomps and vanities of Satan, are admired with something approaching dread. Thus adorned, I was conducted to the choir. The superior and her assistants were in their places, and in their stalls knelt the nuns in prayer. I pronounced the sacramental words, which forever separated me from the living, and, as the ritual of the ceremony exacts, I thrust away with my foot the rich velvet cushion upon which, at certain moments, it had been my duty to kneel. I tore off my necklace and bracelets, and cast aside all my ornaments, in token of my renunciation of vanity and luxury. I abjured all womanly coquetry, and this was not difficult, since I had not the right to make myself beautiful in order to please you.

Then came the most dreaded and most mournful scene of this religious drama—the moment when the new sister is shorn of her hair, a vanity henceforth useless. It recalls the last toilet of one condemned to the guillotine, except that in this case the victim is inno-

cent, or, at all events, purified by repentance. Although I had very sincerely and from the bottom of my heart abjured all human attachment, the pallor of death overspread my face when the steel of the scissors clashed in my long, fair hair, upheld by one of the nuns. The golden locks fell in thick masses upon the flags of the sacristy, where they had taken me, and I regarded the shower with a vacant eye. I was stunned and filled with a secret horror. The cold metal, as it grazed my neck, made me tremble nervously as at the contact of an axe. My teeth chattered, and the prayer I tried to utter would not pass my lips. An icy perspiration, like that of the last agony, bathed my temples. My vision became blurred, and the lamp suspended before the altar of the Virgin seemed to fade away in a fog. My knees gave way beneath me, and I had just time to cry, stretching forth my arms as if to seize my escaping senses, "I am dying!"

They gave me salts to inhale, and when I recovered, as dazzled by the light of day as a ghost emerging from the grave, I found myself in the arms of the sisters, who were supporting me with placid gentleness, as if

accustomed to exhibitions of weakness upon such occasions.

"It is nothing," said the youngest of the sisters, compassionately. "The worst is over; commend yourself to the Holy Virgin, and all will be well; the same thing happened to me when I pronounced my vows. It is a final effort of the Evil One."

Two sisters clothed me in the black robe of the order and invested me with the white stole; then, leading me back to the choir, they cast over my cropped head the veil, the symbolical shroud which made me dead to the world, and henceforth visible to God alone. A pious legend, which I had heard related, declares that a request made of heaven, when first enveloped by the folds of the funereal veil, will be granted. When the veil fell over me, I implored of Divine Goodness, if there was nothing wrong in such a request, that after my death my love should be revealed to you. Immediately a sudden, inexplicable happiness filled my being. I knew my prayer was answered, and I felt a profound relief, for this had been my greatest trouble, the thing which had hurt me and made me suffer day and night, like hair-cloth

worn beneath the garments. I had indeed renounced you in this world, but my heart rebelled against guarding its secret eternally.

Shall I tell you of my life in the convent? Day followed day, one precisely like the other. Every hour had its prayer, its devotion, its task to be fulfilled; life marched on with a regular step toward eternity, happy to approach nearer and nearer its end. And yet the apparent peacefulness and calm covered sometimes much weariness, sadness, and feverish trouble. The thoughts, although curbed by prayer and meditation, will persist in flying into forbidden channels. A homesick longing for the world seizes upon you. You regret your liberty, your family, nature; you think of the broad horizons flooded with light, the meadows starred with flowers, the hills with their wooded undulations, the blue mists which float in the evening over the fields, the highway with its procession of carriages, the river dotted with boats, life, movement, gay laughter, constant variety. You long to move, to run, to fly; you envy the bird its wings; you are uneasy in your living tomb; you overleap, in fancy, the high walls of the convent, and

your thoughts return to the places you loved, to the scenes of your infancy and youth, which live again with a magical clearness of detail. You make useless plans of happiness, forgetting that the bolt of the irrevocable has fastened you in forever. The most pious hearts are exposed to these temptations, these memories, these mirages, which the will repels and prayer attempts to dissipate, but which rise again in the silence and solitude of the cell, within the four white walls which have for their sole decoration a crucifix of black wood. My mind, which at first had been completely filled with religious fervor, reverted to the past with ever-increasing frequency and tenderness. Regret for a lost happiness oppressed my heart with sadness, and the silent tears would often roll down my cheeks, without my being aware of it. Sometimes at night I wept in my dreams, and in the morning I would find my rude pillow bedewed with the bitter drops. In happier dreams, I fancied myself returning from a drive, and mounting, side by side with you, the white steps of a villa flecked with the bluish shadows of the great trees surrounding it. I was your wife, and your eyes rested

upon me with a tender, protecting glance. All obstacles between us had vanished. But I was horrified at these false, joyful visions, which I shrank from as from a sin. I confessed and did penance. I lay awake in prayer and struggled against sleep in order to be free from these wicked illusions, but they would always return.

The struggle weakened me, and I soon began to show the effects of it. Without being ill, I was delicate. The harsh conventual life, with its fasts, its abstinences, its mortifications of the flesh; the fatigue of the nocturnal services, the sepulchral chill of the church, the rigors of a long winter, from which I was but poorly protected by a thin frock of serge; and, more than all this, the combats of the soul, the alternations of exaltation and dejection, of doubt and fervent belief, the fear of being unable to present to the divine Bridegroom anything but a heart disturbed by a human attachment, and so incur the vengeance of Heaven, for God is a jealous God, and will accept no divided love; perhaps, also, the jealousy with which Madame d'Ymbercourt inspired me; all these things had a disastrous effect upon my health. My complexion assumed the color of wax; my

eyes, looking enormous in my thin face, burned feverishly in their hollow sockets; the veins of my temples formed a net-work of blue lines, and my lips lost their fresh, bright color. My hands became as delicate, transparent, and pale as those of a ghost. Death is not considered in the convent as it is in the world; within the cloister it is hailed with joy, as the deliverance of the soul, the open door of heaven, the end of trouble and the beginning of happiness. God prefers to take to himself those he loves, and He shortens their stay in the valley of misery and tears. Prayers and hymns, full of hope, are chanted at the bedside of the dying nun, whom the sacraments purify from all earthly stain, and who is already transfigured by the light of the other world. To her comrades she is an object to be envied, not to be deplored.

I felt no fear as the fatal hour approached; I hoped that God would pardon my one love, so chaste, so pure, so involuntary, and which I had striven earnestly to forget from the moment it had appeared guilty in my eyes; and that He would receive me into His grace. I soon became so weak that one day I fainted at my

devotions, and, covered with my veil, lay extended like one dead, with my face against the floor; the nuns at first took no notice of my stillness, which they took for a religious trance; but, when they saw that I did not rise, two of them leaned over me, and raising my inert body, led, or rather carried, me to my cell, which I was destined never again to leave. I remained long hours lying dressed upon my bed, passing my rosary through my emaciated fingers, lost in some vague meditation, and wondering if my wish would be fulfilled after my death. I grew visibly weaker and weaker, and the remedies they gave me, although they diminished my suffering, could not cure me; and, indeed, I had no desire to recover, for I had, beyond this life, a hope long cherished, and the possible realization of which inspired me with a curious longing for the world beyond the grave.

My passage from this world to the other was very peaceful. All the bonds of mind and matter were broken, except a thread a thousand times more filmy than those gossamer filaments that float in the air on beautiful autumn days, and this thread alone detained

my soul, ready to spread its wings in the ether of the infinite. Alternate lights and shadows, like the intermittent gleams of an expiring night-lamp, flickered before my glazing eyes. The prayers murmured by the nuns kneeling about me, and in which I forced myself mentally to join, reached me only as confused hummings, vague and distant mutterings. My deadened senses discerned nothing earthly, and my thoughts, abandoning my brain, floated dubiously, in a fantastical dream, between the material and the immaterial worlds, no longer attached to the one and not yet having reached the other, while my fingers, colorless as ivory, picked mechanically at the coverings on the bed. Finally, the last moments approached, and they extended me on the ground, with a bag of ashes beneath my head, to die in the humble attitude befitting a poor servant of God rendering her dust to the dust from which she sprung. My breathing became more and more difficult; I was stifling; a feeling of terrible anguish gripped my breast; the instinct of nature still fought against destruction; but soon the unavailing struggle ceased, and in a feeble sigh my soul escaped from my lips.

## XII.

NO human words can render the sensations of a soul which, delivered from its bodily prison, passes from this life to the other, from time to eternity, from the finite to the infinite. My body, motionless, and already clothed with that ashen pallor which is the livery of death, lay upon its funeral couch, surrounded by the praying nuns, and I was no more a part of it than the butterfly is a part of the chrysalis, the empty shell, the shapeless husk, which it abandons to open its young wings in the hitherto unknown and suddenly revealed light. At first there was an interval of utter darkness, to which succeeded a burst of splendor, an opening of the horizon and a disappearance of all boundaries and obstacles, that filled me with indescribable ecstacy. The sudden birth of new senses made me understand mysteries which are beyond the ken of earthly faculties. Freed from that clay which is subject to the laws of gravity, and which until so lately had weighed me down, I bounded

enthusiastically into the unfathomable ether. Distance no longer existed, and I had but to express the desire, to be wherever I wished. With a flight more rapid than that of light, I traced broad circles in the boundless azure of space, as if to take possession of the vastness, crossing in my path swarms of souls and spirits.

A waving light, brilliant as diamond dust, formed the atmosphere; each grain of this sparkling dust, as I soon perceived, was a soul. Through the light quivered currents, eddies, ripples, waves, as in that impalpable dust spread upon harmonic tables to show the vibrations of sound, and all these movements caused an ever-changing, rippling flash throughout the splendor. The greatest number which mathematicians can imagine, reaching far into the depths of infinity, with its millions of zeros adding their enormous power to the initial figure, would give not even an approximate idea of the appalling multitude of souls which composed this light, as different from material light as day differs from night.

In addition to the souls who had already passed through the trials of life since the cre-

ation of our world and that of the other universes, were the expectant souls, the virgin souls, who were waiting their turn to become incarnate, upon a planet of one system or another. There were enough of them to people for millions of years all these universes which proceeded from God, and which in His own good time He will draw back to Himself.

These souls, although dissimilar in essence and aspect, according to the world which they were destined to inhabit, and in spite of the infinite variety of their characteristics, all recalled the divine type, and were made in the image of their Creator. The celestial spark was the essential element of them all. Some of them were white like the diamond, others of the color of the ruby, the emerald, the sapphire, the topaz, and the amethyst. In the absence of other terms within your comprehension, I employ these names of stones, vile pebbles, opaque crystals, as black as ink, the most brilliant of which would be only stains if placed against that background of living splendors.

Now and again passed some great angel bearing an order from God to a remote portion

of the infinite, and making the universes oscillate with the palpitations of his huge wings. The milky way rippled through the heavens, a river of liquefied suns. The stars, which I saw in their true form and grandeur, such as it would be impossible for the imagination of man to conceive, blazed with tremendous, savage brilliancy; behind these, and in the openings between them, in more and more vertiginous depths of space, I perceived others and still others, so that the background of the firmament was nowhere visible, and I might have believed myself enclosed in the centre of an immense sphere, all constellated within with planets. Their radiance —white, yellow, blue, green, red—reached an intensity and a brilliancy which would make the light of our sun appear black, but which the eyes of my soul supported without difficulty. I floated about, ascending, descending, traversing in a second millions of leagues through glimmerings of auroras, iris-like reflections, radiations of gold and silver, diamond-like phosphorescences, starry flashes, in all the magnificence, blissfulness, and rapture of the divine light. I heard the music of the spheres, an

echo of which reached the ear of Pythagoras; the mysterious numbers, the pivots of the universe, marked the rhythm. With a roar of harmony powerful as the thunder and sweet as the music of the flute, our world rolled slowly in space about its sun, and with a sweeping glance I embraced the planets from Mercury to Neptune, as, accompanied by their satellites, they described their ellipses. A flash of intuition revealed to me the names by which they are known in Heaven. I understood their structure, their use, their aim; no secret of their vast and wonderful life was hidden from me. I read as in an open book the poem of God, which has suns for its letters. Would that I were permitted to explain to you a few of its pages! But you still live in an inferior, shadowy region, and your eyes would be blinded with the blaze of brilliancy.

Still, in spite of the ineffable beauty of this marvelous spectacle, I had not forgotten the earth, the poor abode I had but recently quitted. My love, conqueror of death, had followed me beyond the tomb, and I saw with a divine joy, an ecstatic rapture, that you loved no one, that your soul was free, and that you

would be mine forever. I knew then that my instinct had spoken truly. We were predestined, the one for the other. Our souls formed that celestial couple which, when united, makes an angel; but the two halves of the supreme whole, to be united in immortality, must have sought each other in life, have recognized one another under the veils of the flesh, and in spite of all trials, obstacles, and distractions. I alone had felt the presence of the sister-soul, and, impelled by the instinct which never deceives, had attempted to join it. With you, the clearness of vision was much less acute, and served only to put you on your guard against ordinary ties and coarse attachments. You understood that you had not yet encountered the heart that was made for yours, and, with passionate fires glowing under an apparent coldness, you held yourself in reserve for a more lofty ideal. Thanks to the grace which was accorded me, I could give you a knowledge of the love you had been ignorant of during my life, and I hoped to inspire you with a desire to follow me to the sphere I inhabit. I had no regrets. What is even the happiest human union in comparison with the rapture two souls

enjoy in the eternal embrace of divine love? Until the arrival of the supreme moment, my task was limited to prevent the world capturing you in its snares, and thus forever separating you from me. Marriage binds in this world and the next, but you did not love Madame d'Ymbercourt; my powers as a spirit permitted me to read your heart, and I had nothing to fear in that direction; still, as the ideal you had dreamed of did not appear, you might allow yourself, through indolence and discouragement, to be drawn into this commonplace union.

Leaving the luminous zones, I descended to the earth, which I saw moving beneath me, dragging in its orbit its foggy atmosphere and its girdles of cloud. I found you without difficulty, and became an invisible partaker of your life, reading your thoughts and influencing them without your knowledge. By my presence, which you did not suspect, I smothered the ideas, desires, and caprices which might have turned you aside from the goal toward which I was directing you. Little by little I disengaged your soul from all earthly shackles; to better guard you, I cast about

your apartments a vague enchantment which attached you to them. It was like a mute, impalpable caress, which filled you with an inexplicable feeling of content; it seemed to you, without your exactly realizing it, that your happiness was enclosed between those four walls. A lover who, on a stormy night, reads his favorite poet before a comfortable fire, while his heart's idol sleeps, buried in sweet dreams, in the shadowy alcove, has the same feeling of domestic felicity as he enjoys the isolation of love; there is nothing outside which is worth the trouble of crossing the threshold; for him the whole world is shut up in that one room. I was obliged to prepare you gradually for my appearance, and, in a hidden manner, to establish relations with you; communication between a spirit and an uninitiated mortal is a difficult thing. A fathomless abyss separates this world from the other. I had succeeded in crossing this abyss; but that was not enough. I must render myself visible to your eyes, which were still covered with a bandage, seeing nothing of the spiritual through the density of matter.

Madame d'Ymbercourt continued to cherish

hopes of obtaining you for a husband, used all her fascinations to attract you to her house, and tormented you with her attentions. I substituted my will for your dormant thoughts, and made you answer that note from the lady in a way that betrayed your real sentiments, and caused you so much surprise. An idea of the supernatural was awakened in you, and, placed more on the alert, you began to be aware that a mysterious power was mingled in your life. The sigh I breathed when, in spite of my warning, you determined to go out, although faint and uncertain as the vibration of an Æolian harp, troubled you deeply, and inspired in your heart a certain occult sympathy. You detected in the sigh an accent of feminine suffering. I could not yet manifest myself to you in a more definite manner, for you were not sufficiently freed from the blind thralldom of matter; and so I appeared to the Baron de Féroë, a disciple of Swedenborg, to request him to say to you those mysterious words, which placed you on your guard against the dangers you were running, and awoke in you a desire to penetrate into the world of spirits, whither my love summoned you. You know

the rest. Must I return to the regions above, or remain here below, and will the spirit be more fortunate than the woman?

Here the impelling force which had caused Malivert's pen to move along the paper stopped, and the young man's thoughts, suspended by Spirite's influence, again took possession of his brain. He read what he had unconsciously written, and became confirmed in his resolution to love only and unto death the charming being who had suffered through him in her short sojourn upon earth. "But what will be our relations?" he thought. "Will Spirite bear me away to the clime she inhabits, or will she hover about me, visible to me alone? Will she answer me if I speak to her, and how shall I understand her?"

These questions were not easy to answer, and so, after a short reflection, Malivert abandoned them and fell into a long reverie, which was broken by Jack announcing the Baron de Féroë.

The two friends shook hands, and the Swede with the pale yellow moustache threw himself back in an arm-chair.

"Guy," he said, stretching out his feet on the fender, "I have come with scant ceremony to ask if I may breakfast with you. I started out early this morning, and, as I was passing your house, the fancy seized me to make you a call, almost as early as your butcher or grocer."

"You did right, Baron; it was a delightful idea," answered Malivert, ringing for Jack and ordering him to serve breakfast at once, and lay two covers.

"I should say, my dear Guy, that you had not been to bed at all," said the Baron, regarding the candles which had burned down to their sockets and the sheets of paper scattered upon the table. "Have you been working all night? Is it soon to appear? What is it, a novel or a poem?"

"Perhaps a poem," responded Malivert, "but I did not compose it. I only held the pen under an inspiration superior to mine."

"I understand," said the Baron; "Apollo dictated, Homer wrote; such verses are the best."

"This poem, if it is one, is not in verse, and it was not whispered in my ear by a mythological god."

"Ah! pardon me! I forgot that you are an enemy of the classical school, and that when talking to you one must banish Apollo and the muses to the pages of Chompré's dictionary or the epistles to Emilie."

"My dear Baron, since you have been, in some sort, my expounder of mysteries and initiator into the supernatural, there is no reason why I should hide from you that those sheets which you took for *copy*, as the printers say, were dictated to me, last night and the night before, by the spirit who is interested in me, and who seems to have known you on earth, as your name is mentioned in her recital."

"You have used pen and paper as a medium," observed the Baron, "because the relations are not yet firmly established between you and the spirit who visits you; but you will soon have no need of such slow and gross means of communication. Your souls will be penetrated with thoughts and desires, without any external sign."

At this moment Jack announced that breakfast was served. Malivert was completely unnerved by the strange events that had happened, the love from beyond the tomb which

Don Juan might have envied him, and scarcely touched the dishes set before him. Baron de Féroë ate, however, but with the moderation of a Swedenborgian, for the one who lives in communication with spirits must mortify the flesh as much as possible.

"This is capital tea that you have," said the Baron; "green tea with white points, gathered after the first spring rains, and which the mandarins drink without sugar, sipping it slowly from cups covered with net-work, so as not to burn the fingers. It is the drink of all others for dreamers and thinkers, for its stimulus is purely intellectual. Nothing is a more gentle dispeller of dullness, or better disposes one for the vision of things unseen by the common herd. Since you are now about to live in an immaterial sphere, I recommend you to drink frequently of the beverage. But you are not listening to me, my dear Guy, and I can understand your inattention. So novel a situation must naturally preoccupy your mind."

"Yes, I confess it," answered Malivert. "I seem to be half intoxicated, and I wonder every moment if I am not the victim of some hallucination."

"Drive away such ideas, which, if persisted in, would put the spirit to flight forever; do not seek to explain what is inexplicable, but yield with absolute faith and submission to the influence which guides you. The least doubt would bring about a rupture and cause you never-ending regret. The permission for two souls, that have never met in life, to be united in Heaven is one rarely accorded; profit by it, and prove yourself worthy of such happiness."

"I will be worthy of it, be assured, and I will not a second time inflict upon Spirite the sorrow I made her suffer, innocently to be sure, while she was in this world. By the way, in the story she dictated to me, she did not tell me the name she bore when on earth."

"Do you care to know it? Go to Père Lachaise, climb the hill, and near the chapel you will see a tomb of white marble, upon which is carved a cross adorned with a wreath of roses, the masterpiece of a celebrated sculptor. In the medallion formed by the wreath is a short inscription, which will furnish you with the information which I am not formally authorized to give you. The tomb, in its mute

language, will speak in my place, although, in my opinion, your curiosity is a useless and foolish one. What matters an earthly name when an eternal love is in question? But you are not as yet wholly detached from human ideas, which, after all, is not remarkable; it is only a short time since you set your foot beyond the circle that encloses ordinary life."

Without further words, the Baron took his leave; and Guy dressed, ordered his carriage, and drove in turn to the most celebrated florists to find a spray of white lilac. It was the depth of winter, and it was difficult to obtain what he wanted. But in Paris there is no such thing as the impossible, when one has money enough to pay for it; so he found it at last, and mounted the hill with beating heart and moistened eyes.

A few flakes of snow, which had not yet melted, glistened like silver tears upon the leaves of the yews, cypresses, firs, and ivy, and lay in white spots upon the ornamentation of the tombs, the tops and the arms of the melancholy crosses. The sky was cloudy, of a yellowish gray, heavy as lead—a most appropriate sky to overhang a cemetery—and the harsh wind

groaned through the narrow alleys of tombs, built to fit the dead.

Malivert soon reached the chapel, and perceived not far from there, all framed in with Irish-ivy, the white tomb, which a slight covering of snow rendered whiter still. He leaned upon the grating, and read this inscription engraven in the centre of the wreath of roses: "Lavinia d'Aufideni, in religion Sister Philomène, died at eighteen years." He pushed his arm through the bars and dropped his branch of lilac upon the inscription; then, although sure of pardon, he remained some minutes near the tomb in dreamy contemplation, his heart heavy with remorse; was he not the murderer of that pure dove that had so soon taken its flight to Heaven?

While he stood leaning against the grating, his hot tears falling upon the cold snow which shrouded the virginal tomb, in the heavy curtains of gray clouds opened a clear space. Like a light dawning through thicknesses of gauze gradually drawn aside, the disk of the sun appeared, of a pallid white, and more like the moon than the orb of day—a sun befitting the dead! Little by little the clouds drew apart,

and through the opening escaped a long ray, visible against the sombre background of the fog and casting a sheen upon the mica of the snow, which rested like a winter's dew upon the spray of white lilac and the wreath of marble roses.

In the luminous quivering of the ray, wherein floated frozen atoms, Malivert thought he could distinguish a graceful, white form, which rose from the tomb like the slender smoke from a silver dish of burning perfume, enveloped in waving folds of gauzy drapery, like the robe in which painters clothe angels. The figure waved its hand to him; and then a cloud passed over the sun, and the vision vanished.

Guy turned away, murmuring the name of Lavinia d'Aufideni, reëntered his carriage, and returned to Paris, peopled with living beings who do not suspect that they are dead, lacking, as they do, the inner life.

## XIII.

FROM that day Malivert's existence was divided into two distinct portions—the one real, the other ideal. To all outward appearances, he was in no way changed; he went to the club and into society; he was seen in the Bois de Boulogne, and upon the boulevards. If any interesting performance took place at the theatres, he was present; and to see him, correctly dressed, perfectly booted and gloved, mingling with the stream of human life, no one would have suspected that the young man was in communication with spirits, and that, after the opera, he obtained glimpses of the mysterious depths of the invisible universe. And yet, to anyone who examined him closely, he would have appeared graver, paler, thinner, and as if spiritualized. The expression of his face was no longer the same; when in repose, his features bore a look of haughty beatitude. Fortunately, the world is not observing, unless it is for its interest to be so, and Malivert's secret was unsuspected.

On the evening of the day he visited the cemetery and learned the earthly name of Spirite, while waiting a manifestation he was exerting all the strength of his will to bring about, he heard, like drops of rain falling into a silver basin, the tinkling of a scale upon the piano. There was no one there; but marvels no longer astonished Malivert. A few notes were struck in a manner to command attention and awaken curiosity. Guy kept his eyes fixed upon the piano, and little by little appeared, in a luminous vapor, the exquisite, shadowy figure of a young girl. The image was at first so transparent that the objects beyond it could be clearly distinguished, as one sees the bottom of a lake through limpid water. Without being in any way material, it then became sufficiently condensed to have the appearance of a living being, but so delicate, so intangible, so ethereal, that it resembled rather the reflection of a body in a mirror than the body itself. There are certain sketches by Prud'hon—scarcely more than suggestions, with faint, blurred outlines, full of lights and shades, as if surrounded by a twilight mist, and the white draperies of which seem made of moonbeams—

which can give a distant idea of the graceful apparition seated before Malivert's piano. Her fingers, of a pink-tipped pallor, wandered over the ivory keys like white butterflies, barely grazing them, but evoking sound by that light contact—so light that it would not have ruffled a feather. The notes, without being struck, rung out of themselves when the luminous hands floated above them. A long, white robe, of a delicate fabric, a thousand times finer than those tissues of India which can be drawn through a ring, fell in luxuriant folds about her, and lay around her feet in billows of snowy foam. Her head was bent a little forward, as if she were reading a score of music opened upon the rack, an attitude which revealed the back of the neck, with its little wayward, golden curls, and the polished, opaline shoulders, whose whiteness melted into that of the robe. Upon her hair, which waved and pulsated as if stirred by a breath, was a small coronet, with starry points. From where Malivert sat, were visible an ear and a part of the cheek, so fresh, rosy, and velvety that the tinting of a peach would have appeared coarse in comparison. It was Lavinia, or Spirite, to preserve

the name which she has hitherto borne in this story. She turned her head for a second, to make sure that Guy was attentive, and that she might begin. Her blue eyes burned with a tender lustre and a celestial sweetness that penetrated Guy's heart. In the look of the angel lingered still something of the young girl.

The piece that she played was the work of a great master, one of those inspirations where genius seems to divine the infinite, and which now powerfully express the secret longings of the soul, and now recall the paradise whence it was driven. In it sighed unspeakable melancholy, was poured forth ardent prayer, resounded a hollow murmur, the last revolt of pride cast down from light into darkness. All these sentiments Spirite rendered with a power which would make one forget Chopin, Liszt, and Thalberg, those magicians of the pianoforte. It seemed to Guy that he was listening to music for the first time. A new art was revealed to him, and a thousand ideas, hitherto unknown, took possession of his soul; the notes awakened in him vibrations of thought so vague, and yet so intense, that he fancied he must have experienced them in some previous

life, since forgotten. Not only did Spirite render all the thoughts of the master, but she expressed the ideal of which he had dreamed, and which it is not always permitted to human infirmity to attain; she completed genius, perfected perfection, added to the absolute.

Guy rose and advanced toward the piano, with the unconscious movements of a somnambulist, and paused, his elbow resting on the top of the instrument, and his eyes plunged passionately into those of Spirite.

The expression upon Spirite's countenance was sublime. Her head was raised and thrown a little backward, revealing her face, illumined with a sort of ecstacy. Inspiration and love glowed with supernatural brilliancy in her upraised eyes. Her parted lips disclosed a row of shining pearls, and her neck, blue-veined like those of the frescoed heads of Guido, had the gentle poise of a dove. The woman diminished and the angel increased, until the intensity of the light radiated from her figure was so vivid that Malivert was forced to turn aside his head.

Spirite perceived the movement, and in a voice sweeter and more harmonious than the

music she was playing, murmured: "Poor fellow! I forgot that you are still confined in your terrestrial prison, and your eyes can not support the feeblest ray of the true light. Later, I will show myself to you as I am in the sphere where you shall follow me. Now, the shadow of my mortal form must suffice to manifest my presence to you, and in this guise you can contemplate me without danger."

By imperceptible transitions, she passed from supernatural to natural beauty. The Psyche wings, which had fluttered an instant on her white shoulders, faded away.

Lavinia reappeared through Spirite, a little more vaporous, but with sufficient reality to make the illusion complete.

She had ceased playing, and was regarding Malivert, who stood before her; a slight smile wandered over her lips, a smile of celestial mockery and divine mischief, as if she were laughing at human weakness, at the same time that she sympathized with it; her eyes, the brilliancy of which was purposely decreased, still expressed the tenderest love, but such as a chaste young girl might have allowed herself to show to the man she was about to marry. For

some minutes, Malivert could well believe that he was with the Lavinia who had sought him so constantly during life, and from whom the sarcasm of destiny had always separated him. Fascinated, breathless with love, and forgetting that the form before him was but a shade, he advanced and, by an instinctive movement, tried to take one of Spirite's hands, which still rested upon the keys, with the intention of raising it to his lips; but his fingers closed together without clasping anything, as if they had passed through a fog.

Although she had nothing to fear, Spirite recoiled with a gesture of offended modesty; but almost immediately her angelic smile reappeared, and she raised her transparent, roseate hand to the lips of the young man, who felt an impression of a vague freshness and a delicate, delicious perfume.

"I forgot," she said, in a voice which did not express itself in words, but which Guy felt resound in his heart, "I forgot that I am no longer a young girl, but a soul, a shade, an impalpable vapor, possessing nothing of the senses of human beings; and what Lavinia would perhaps have refused, Spirite accords

you, not as a pleasure of the flesh, but as a sign of pure love and eternal union;" and she allowed her filmy hand to rest for a few seconds beneath Guy's imaginary kiss.

Then she turned again to the piano, which poured forth a melody of incomparable power and sweetness, in which Guy recognized one of his poems—the one he liked the best—transposed from the language of verse to the language of music. It was a composition in which, disdainful of vulgar joys, he breathed forth a despairing longing for those higher spheres where the desire of the poet will at last be satisfied. With marvelous intuition, Spirite interpreted what lay beneath the mere words, what remains unuttered in even the most beautiful phrases of human speech, the mysterious, hidden depths, the secret aspiration which one scarcely acknowledges even to himself, the unspeakable and the inexpressible, the *desideratum* of the thought which one despairs of attaining, and all the grace, buoyancy, and delicacy of touch which escape the arid limitations of words. With an uplifting of the soul, she opened the paradise of realized and accomplished hopes. She stood erect upon the

luminous threshold, in a brilliancy that would make suns pale, divinely beautiful and yet humanly tender, opening her arms to the soul that was longing for the ideal, the final reward, the starry crown and the cup of love—Beatrice revealed only beyond the tomb. In melody, expressive of the purest devotion, she intimated, with divine reticence and celestial modesty, that she herself, in the leisure of eternity and the glory of the infinite, would fulfill all these unsatisfied desires. She promised to genius happiness and love, but such as the imagination of man, even when prompted by a spirit, could not conceive.

During the latter part of the music she had risen; her hands no longer made the motions of striking the keys, and the melodies escaped from the piano in visible, bright-hued vibrations, spreading through the atmosphere of the room in luminous pulsations, like those of the aurora borealis. Lavinia was gone and Spirite had reappeared, but taller, more majestic than before, and surrounded by a blaze of light; long wings were outspread from her shoulders; although it was evident that she wished to remain, she had already quitted the floor of the

chamber; a higher power commanded her presence, and Malivert found himself alone in a state of exaltation easy to understand.

But little by little he recovered his calmness, and a delicious languor succeeded the feverish excitement. He felt that satisfaction, which it is said that poets and philosophers so rarely experience, of having his genius thoroughly understood in all its depth and delicacy. What a startling and radiant interpretation Spirite had given to his verses, the meaning and power of which he, the author, had never so well understood! How identified her soul had become with his! How perfectly her mind had penetrated his thoughts!

The next day he longed to work; his enthusiasm, so long extinguished, blazed up again, and ideas pressed tumultuously about his brain. Limitless horizons, endless perspectives opened before his eyes. A world of new sentiments fermented in his breast, and to express them he demanded of language more than she could give. The old forms, the old moulds broke, and sometimes the sentence which was being melted into shape burst forth and overflowed its boundaries, but in superb

splashes, like rays of broken stars. Never had he risen to such heights, and the greatest of poets would willingly have signed what he wrote that day.

Suddenly, just as he had finished one strophe and was considering the next, with his eyes wandering absently about the study, he saw Spirite, who, half reclining on the divan, with her back supported by a cushion, her chin resting in one hand, and the tapering fingers of the other playing with the golden meshes of her hair, was regarding him with loving contemplation. She had apparently been there for a long time, but she had not cared to reveal her presence for fear of disturbing his work. As Malivert rose from his chair to approach her, she made him a sign not to disturb himself, and, in a voice sweeter than any music, she repeated, strophe for strophe, verse for verse, the poem at which Guy was working. With mysterious sympathy she perceived the thoughts of her lover, followed them in their flight, and even surpassed them; for not only was she gifted with intuition, but she also possessed foresight, and she recited complete the unfinished stanza which he was racking his brains to find a fitting end for.

The poem, of course, was addressed to her. What other subject could Malivert treat of? Carried along by his love for Spirite, he scarcely remembered the earth, and soared into the empyrean as far and as high as wings attached to human shoulders can attain.

"It is beautiful," said Spirite, whose voice Malivert heard resound in his breast, for it did not reach his ear like ordinary sounds. "It is beautiful even to a spirit; genius is undoubtedly divine; it invents the ideal, it catches glimpses of the higher beauty and the eternal light. To what heights can it not reach when it has for wings faith and love! But descend; return to the regions where the air can be breathed by mortal lungs. All your nerves are quivering like the cords of a lyre, and your brow is moist with excitement. Strange, feverish lights gleam in your eyes. Beware of madness, to which the ecstacy of genius is akin. Calm yourself, and if you love me, live once more human life—I wish it!"

So, in obedience to her request, Malivert went out into society, and although men no longer appeared to him anything but distant shadows, phantoms with whom he had nothing

in common, he tried to mingle with them; he assumed an interest in the gossip and scandals of the day, and smiled at the description of the extraordinary costume worn by Mademoiselle A—— at the last masked ball; he even accepted an invitation to play whist with the old Duchess de C——; it was wholly immaterial to him what he did.

But, in spite of his efforts to attach himself to the world, an imperious influence drew him away from the terrestrial sphere. He tried to walk and he felt himself uplifted. An irresistible longing was consuming him. The appearances of Spirite no longer satisfied him, and his soul sped after her when she disappeared, as if trying to detach itself from his body.

A love excited by the impossible, and in which still burned something of the earthly flame, devoured him and clung to his flesh, as did the poisoned shirt of Nessus to the skin of Hercules. His relations with the spiritual world had been too short for him to have entirely divested himself of the desires of the flesh.

He could not seize in his arms the airy phantom of Spirite, but this phantom represented

the image of Lavinia with an illusion of beauty sufficient to delude love and to make him forget that the exquisite face, with its eyes full of tenderness and its mouth wreathed in a loving smile, was, after all, only a shade and a reflection.

Guy saw before him, at every hour of the day and night, his *alma adorata*, sometimes as a pure ideal in the splendor of Spirite, and sometimes under the more humanly feminine appearance of Lavinia. Now, she floated above his head in the transplendent guise of an angel; and again, as a sweetheart making him a visit, she appeared seated in the big arm-chair, reclining on the divan or leaning against the table; she seemed to examine the papers scattered over the desk, to inhale the perfume of the flowers in the jardinières, to open the books, to play with the rings placed in the onyx cup upon the mantel-piece, and in fact to enact all those tender follies indulged in by a young girl who chances to find herself in the room of her fiancé.

Spirite was pleased to show herself in Guy's eyes as Lavinia would have appeared on a like occasion, if fate had been favorable to her love;

she reconstructed, after death, her chaste, girlish romance, chapter by chapter. With a little colored vapor she reproduced her toilettes of other days, placed in her hair the same flower or ribbon. Her phantom assumed the graceful attitudes and poses which had been natural to her human body. She wished, with a coquetry which proved that the woman had not wholly disappeared in the angel, that Malivert should love her not only with a posthumous love given to the spirit, but as he might have loved her during life, when she sought so fruitlessly to meet him at theatres, balls, and receptions.

If his lips had not brushed the empty air, when, transported with longing, mad with love, intoxicated with passion, he forgot himself in some fruitless caress, Guy might have believed that he had really married Lavinia d'Aufideni, the vision at times became so clear, glowing, and life-like. In the perfect sympathy which existed between them, he heard internally, but as if in a real interview, the voice of Lavinia, with its fresh, youthful, silvery accents, responding to his ardent outbursts with a pure and modest tenderness.

The torments of Tantalus were his; the cup full of cool water, held by a loving hand, approached his feverish lips, but he could not even brush the rim of it; the perfumed grapes, amber and ruby tinted, hung low above his head, but fled each time his eager grasp.

The short intervals during which Spirite left him, summoned doubtless by some absolute order from that place where "all things are possible," had become unbearable to him, and when she disappeared, he would gladly have dashed his head against the wall which closed upon her.

One evening the thought came to him: "Since Spirite can not take on the vestments of the flesh nor mingle in my life otherwise than as a vision, why should I not 'shuffle off this mortal coil,' rid myself of this thick, heavy form which prevents me rising with the soul I adore to the spheres where spirits hover?"

The idea seemed to him a wise one. He rose, and selected from among an arrangement of savage weapons hung against the wall—clubs, tomahawks, assegais, cutlasses—an arrow tipped with parrot feathers and furnished with a

sharp point made of fish-bone. This arrow had been dipped in *curare*, that terrible poison of which the American Indians alone know the secret, and for which there is no antidote.

He directed the point toward the hand he was about to prick, when suddenly before him appeared Spirite, alarmed, distracted, suppliant, and, with a gesture of frantic love, threw her shadowy arms about his neck, straining him to her spirit heart, and covering his face with impalpable kisses. The woman had forgotten that she was no longer but a phantom.

"Unhappy man," she cried, "do not do that; do not kill yourself to join me! Your death thus brought about would separate us beyond all hope, and open between us an abyss which millions of years would not suffice to bridge. Recover your senses and live your life; the longest of lives is in point of time no more than the fall of a grain of sand; to enable you to bear the period of waiting, think of eternity, where we will be permitted to love each other forever; and forgive me for having been a coquette. The woman wished to be loved as well as the spirit; Lavinia was jealous of Spirite, and my folly has well-nigh lost you

to me forever." Then, as she breathed the last words, she reassumed her form of an angel and extended her hands above the head of Malivert, who felt descend upon him a celestial peace and happiness.

## XIV.

MADAME D'YMBERCOURT was astonished at the slight effect which her flirtation with Monsieur d'Aversac had produced upon Guy de Malivert; her lack of success overturned all her ideas of feminine strategy. It had been her belief that nothing reanimated love like a touch of jealousy; but she forgot that, for the truth of the maxim, the existence of love itself was a *sine qua non.* Still, when a young man had been in the habit of attending her receptions regularly enough for the space of three years, brought her occasionally a bouquet on opera nights, and stood in the back of her box without going to sleep, she naturally supposed that he must be somewhat fascinated by her charms. Was she not young, handsome, fashionable, rich? Did she not play the piano like a prize-scholar of the Conservatoire? Did she not pour out tea with the perfect manners of Lady Penelope herself? Did she not write her notes in an English hand —long, sloping, angular, entirely aristocratic?

What exception could be taken to her carriages, which came from Binder's, or her horses, bought from Crémieux, with his guarantee? Did not her footmen make a fine appearance, and were they not evidently the servants of a well-appointed household? Did not her dinners merit the approbation of epicures? All this being so, she could not understand what more a young man could desire in a wife. But still the lady of the sleigh she had seen in the Bois de Boulogne preoccupied her mind, and she made the tour of the lake several times in the hope of meeting her, and seeing if Malivert were with her. The lady did not reappear, however, and Madame d'Ymbercourt's jealousy had nothing substantial to feed upon; no one seemed to know, or even to have noticed, the mysterious Russian. Was Guy in love with her, or had he simply yielded to an impulse of curiosity when he started Grymalkin in pursuit of her? This was the riddle which Madame d'Ymbercourt could not unravel. So she returned to the idea that she had frightened Guy away, by giving him to understand that he was compromising her; she intended that her words should force him to a

formal declaration, and she now regretted that she had ever spoken them; for Guy, obeying her too literally, and, moreover, engrossed with Spirite, had entirely ceased his calls. His absolute compliance piqued the Countess, who would have preferred less submission. Although her suspicions were not very keenly aroused by the fleeting vision of the Bois de Boulogne, she felt that this excessive care of her reputation concealed some love affair. There was no apparent change, however, in Guy's life; and Jack, secretly questioned by Madame d'Ymbercourt's maid, declared that for a very long time he had not heard the slightest frou-frou of silk upon his master's private staircase; that Monsieur de Malivert rarely went out, saw scarcely anyone except the Baron de Féroë, lived like an anchorite, and passed a large part of his nights in writing.

D'Aversac increased his attentions, and Madame d'Ymbercourt accepted them with the tacit gratitude which a woman feels who has been somewhat slighted, and who needs to be assured of her charms by new admirers. She did not love Monsieur d'Aversac, but she was grateful

to him for valuing so highly what Guy seemed to disdain; so, one evening, at a representation of La Traviata, it was noticed that Malivert's place was occupied by d'Aversac, carefully dressed, a camellia in his button-hole, perfumed and curled, and beaming with fatuous happiness. For a long time he had cherished the ambition to please Madame d'Ymbercourt, but the marked preference accorded to Guy de Malivert had relegated him to the third or fourth ranks of those silent adorers who circulate more or less about a pretty woman, awaiting an opportunity, caused by a rupture or a bit of spite.

He was full of little attentions, held her lorgnette or her programme, smiled at her least word, leaned mysteriously forward to answer, and when she gently patted her gloved hands in approval of some brilliant passage of the diva he applauded rapturously, raising his hands as high as his head; in short, he displayed himself to the public as her attendant swain.

It was beginning to be whispered in the boxes, "Is not Madame d'Ymbercourt to marry Malivert, after all?" And there was a

general movement of curiosity when, after the first act, Guy appeared at the entrance of the orchestra, and, after glancing about the auditorium, allowed his eyes to rest absently upon the box of the Countess. D'Aversac himself, as he perceived this, experienced a slight feeling of uneasiness; but the strongest lorgnettes could not discover the faintest sign of annoyance upon Malivert's face. He turned neither red nor pale; there was no contraction of the brows; no muscle of his face moved; there was nothing of that furious aspect assumed by lovers at the sight of the adored one attended by another; he was perfectly calm and serene. The expression of his face was that of one possessed of a secret happiness, and about his lips hovered, as the poet says:

*Le sourire mystérieux*
*Des voluptés intérieures.*

"If Guy were beloved by a fairy or a princess, he could not have a more triumphant air," said an old habitué of the balcony, a Don Juan emeritus. "If Madame d'Ymbercourt still holds to it, she will wear mourning for her projected plan of matrimony, for she will never be called Madame de Malivert."

During the entr'acte Guy made a short visit to the Countess' box, to take leave of the lady, as he was about to be absent for some months in Greece. His courteous treatment of d'Aversac was natural, neither constrained nor exaggerated; he had none of that coldly ceremonious bearing of people who are vexed, and he pressed with the utmost calmness the hand of Madame d'Ymbercourt, whose countenance betrayed her agitation, although she made heroic efforts to appear indifferent. The color which had flushed her cheeks when Guy left his seat in the orchestra to come to the box, had given place to a pallor which was not due to rice-powder. She had hoped that he would exhibit some anger, a movement of passion, a mark of jealousy, perhaps even that he might provoke a quarrel; but his calmness, which was only too evidently unassumed, overthrew her hopes and took her completely by surprise. She had believed that Malivert was in love with her, and she saw now that she was mistaken. Such a discovery was a blow to both her pride and her heart. Guy had inspired her with a deeper affection than she herself had been aware of. The comedy she was playing, now that she saw

it was of no avail, bored and fatigued her. After Malivert's departure, she leaned her elbow upon the edge of the box, returning only monosyllables to the gallant speeches addressed to her by d'Aversac, and disconcerting that gentleman by her silence and coldness. He could not understand how it was, but winter seemed to have taken the place of spring. A sudden frost had withered the roses. "Have I said or done anything stupid?" thought the poor fellow, who only a few minutes before had received such gracious treatment; "or is it possible that I have been made game of? Guy, just now, had an affected ease of manner, and the Countess exhibited some emotion. Does she still love Malivert?" In spite of all, however, as d'Aversac knew that there were several glasses leveled at him, he continued to play his part, leaning toward the Countess and murmuring in her ear, with an air of mysterious intimacy, commonplaces which all the world might have heard.

The old habitué, who was intensely amused by the little drama transpiring before him, watched out of the corner of his eye each movement of the actors concerned in it. "D'Aver-

sac's good nature is but ill assumed; he is not strong enough for his part. However, he is nothing but a donkey, and donkeys sometimes have good luck with women. Stupidity is closely allied to folly, and Laridon succeeds Cæsar when Cæsar is weary of his empire; but who can be Guy's new flame?" Such were the reflections of this veteran of Cythera, who was as strong in theory as he had once been in practice, and he followed the direction of Malivert's eyes to see if they were fixed upon any of the beautiful women who glittered in the boxes like jewels in their case. "Can it be that vaporish blonde in the pale-green gown, with garlands of silver leaves and opal ornaments, who looks as if gilded with a moonbeam, like an elf or a nixy, and who contemplates the chandelier with a sentimental air, as if it were the planet of the night? Or can it be that brunette with hair darker than midnight, eyes like black diamonds, a scarlet mouth and a classic profile, whose blood runs swiftly beneath her warm pallor, who is so passionate beneath her statuesque calmness, and who might be taken for the daughter of the Venus of Milo if that divine masterpiece

deigned to have children? No, it is neither—neither the moon nor the sun. That Russian princess below there, in the first tier, with her mad luxury, her exotic beauty, and her extravagant grace, might have some chance. Guy is rather fond of anything odd, and he has traveled in such extraordinary places that his tastes are somewhat barbarian. No, she is not the one. He has just looked at her with a glance as cold as if he were examining a casket of malachite. Why not that Parisian, in the proscenium-box, dressed in perfect taste, delicate, pretty, spirituelle, and whose every movement raises a foam of lace and seems to be in unison with the music of a flute, as if she were a dancing figure on a panel from Herculaneum? Balzac would have devoted thirty pages to the description of such a woman, and his genius would have been well employed; she is well worth the trouble. But Guy is not civilized enough to appreciate that peculiar charm which had a greater fascination than mere outward beauty for the author of the *Comédie Humaine*. Well, I must abandon for this evening the task of penetrating this mystery," concluded the old beau, enclosing in its case a

lorgnette which resembled a piece of artillery. "The lady of Malivert's fancy is most assuredly not here."

After the opera, d'Aversac, buttoned to the chin in his overcoat, and with the nonchalant air of a man of fashion, stood in the lobby beside Madame d'Ymbercourt, who had thrown over her evening dress an opera cloak of satin bordered with swansdown, the hood of which, falling back upon her shoulders, left her head uncovered. The Countess was pale, and this evening really beautiful. The pain and distress she was suffering lent to her face, which was ordinarily coldly regular, an expression and life which had hitherto been lacking. She seemed to have completely forgotten her escort, who stood two feet from her, seeking to dissimulate his chagrin by a continual chatter.

"What has happened to Madame d'Ymbercourt this evening?" said one of the young men who were standing under the vestibule to review, as they passed, the feminine ranks of beauty. "She never looked so handsome as she does to-night. D'Aversac is a lucky fellow."

"Not so lucky as you think," rejoined a young man with a fine, delicate face, like a portrait

by Van Dyck stepped down from its frame. "He is not the one who has given that animated expression to the Countess' face, which is usually as characterless as a waxen mask of one of Canova's Venuses. The spark came from another direction. D'Aversac is not the Prometheus of this Pandora. Wood possesses no power to infuse life into marble."

"All the same," observed another, "Malivert shows poor taste to desert the Countess just now. She deserves some one superior to d'Aversac for an avenger. I don't believe Guy can do better, and he will probably repent his disdain."

"He will be wrong if he does," said the portrait by Van Dyck, "and for this reason. Madame d'Ymbercourt is handsomer than usual to-night, because her feelings have been aroused. Now, if Malivert did not leave her, she would feel no emotion, and her classically regular features would preserve their uninteresting expression; the metamorphosis you have noticed would not take place. So, Malivert is right to go to Greece, as he announced yesterday at the club. *Dixi.*"

The footman announcing Madame d'Ymber-

court's carriage put an end to the conversation, and more than one young man committed the sin of envy as he saw d'Aversac enter the coupé with the Countess. The door was slammed to, the footman sprung up behind in a twinkling, and the carriage whirled away. D'Aversac, half covered by the voluminous satin train, and inhaling the delicate perfume the Countess affected, sought to profit by the short interview, and say to her a few words a little more tender than usual. It was necessary to find upon the instant something which should clearly, and yet delicately, show his feelings, for it is not a long distance from the Place Ventadour to the Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin; but improvisation was not the strong point of Guy's rival. Madame d'Ymbercourt, it must be confessed, did not give him much encouragement; she remained perfectly silent, and, leaning back in the dark corner of the carriage, she nervously twisted between her fingers her lace handkerchief.

While d'Aversac was attempting to bring to a close his laboriously tender speech, Madame d'Ymbercourt, who had been absorbed by her own thoughts, and had not heard a word he

was saying, suddenly seized his arm and said, abruptly:

"Do you know what woman it is to whom Monsieur de Malivert is devoted?"

This singular and unexpected question was a terrible shock to d'Aversac. It was of doubtful propriety, and proved that the Countess had not given him, d'Aversac, a single thought. The card-house of his hopes crumbled at this breath of passion.

"I do not know her," he stammered; "and if I did, discretion, delicacy, would prevent me—every gentleman, in such a case, knows that it is his duty to——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the Countess, in cutting tones, "men always shield one another, even when they are rivals. I shall never know." Then, after a short silence, during which she recovered something of her self-possession, she continued: "Pardon me, my dear Monsieur d'Aversac, my nerves are horribly unstrung this evening, and I know that I am saying foolish things; do not be angry with me, and come to see me to-morrow, when I shall be calmer. But we have reached home," extending her hand; "tell the coachman where

to take you." And she rapidly descended from the coupé and ran up the steps, ignoring d'Aversac's proffered arm.

Evidently, to accompany a beautiful woman in a carriage from the Italiens to the Chaussée-d'Antin is not always so agreeable as ingenuous young men imagine it to be. D'Aversac, sheepishly enough, ordered the coachman to drive him to the club, where his own carriage awaited him. He played baccarat, and lost a hundred louis, which did not tend to restore his good humor. As he drove home, he thought: "How the deuce does that Malivert manage to make himself so popular with women?"

Meanwhile, Madame d'Ymbercourt had dismissed her maid, and, wrapped in a dressing-gown of white cashmere, sat with her elbows resting on her writing-desk, and her hands buried in the masses of her hair. She remained in this position for some time, with her eyes fixed upon the writing materials spread out before her. She meant to write to Guy, but it was a difficult letter to compose. The thoughts which surged in her brain escaped her when she tried to embody them in sen-

tences. She scribbled five or six rough drafts, verbose, incoherent, and illegible, in spite of her beautiful English hand, without attaining to anything that satisfied her. One said too much, and another too little. None of them reflected the sentiments of her heart, and all of them were torn up and cast into the fire. Finally, she accepted the following:

"Do not be angry, my dear Guy, at actions which were pure coquetry, I assure you, for they had no other object than to render you a little jealous, and so bring you to my side. You know well that I love you, although I am afraid you do not care much for me. Your cold, calm manner has frozen my heart. Forget what I said to you. It was done through the advice of a mischief-making friend. Are you really going to Greece? Is it worth while now to fly from me—me, who have no other thought than to please you? Do not go; your absence would make me too unhappy."

She signed this note "Cécile d'Ymbercourt," sealed it with her crest, and thought of sending it on the spot; but as she rose to summon a domestic, the clock struck two; it was too late to send a man to the end of the Fauborg Saint-Germain, where Guy lived.

"Ah! well," she thought, "I will send it early in the morning, so that Guy will receive it as soon as he is up—that is, if he has not already gone away."

She retired, weary and worn out; but for some time it was in vain for her to court repose. She thought of the lady of the sleigh, and said to herself that Guy loved her, and jealousy implanted its sharp needles in her heart. At last she fell asleep, but her rest was troubled, full of thoughts more painful than those of her waking moments. A small lamp, suspended from the ceiling and shaded by a globe of opaque, blue glass, spread through the chamber a faint, azure light, not unlike that of the moon; it shone softly and mysteriously upon the face of the Countess, whose unloosened hair lay in thick, black masses upon the whiteness of the pillow. One arm hung down outside the bed.

Suddenly, close to the couch, appeared, becoming gradually more and more condensed, a light, transparent, bluish vapor, like the smoke from a perfume censer; this vapor resolved itself into a more definite shape, and soon became a young girl of celestial beauty, whose

golden hair formed a luminous aureole about her head. Spirite, for it was she, regarded the sleeping woman with that look of melancholy pity which angels must wear in the presence of human suffering, and leaning over her like the shadow of a dream, she let fall upon her forehead two or three drops of a dark liquid from a little vase shaped like the lachrymary urns found in ancient tombs, murmuring as she did so, "Since thou art no longer dangerous to the one I love, and thou canst not now part his soul from mine, I pity thee, for thou sufferest on his account, and I bring thee the divine nepenthe. Forget and be happy, oh thou who wast the cause of my death!"

The vision disappeared. The features of the beautiful sleeper became composed, as if to a painful nightmare had succeeded a pleasant dream; a slight smile played about her lips; with an unconscious movement she drew into bed her lovely white arm, which had now the coldness as well as the whiteness of marble, and drew over it the light eider-down quilt. Her sleep, calm and refreshing, lasted until morning, and when she awoke, the first thing she perceived was her letter lying upon a table by the bedside.

"Shall I send it?" asked Aglaé, who had entered the chamber to open the blinds, and saw that the eyes of her mistress were directed to the missive.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Madame d'Ymbercourt, quickly; "throw it in the fire." Then she added, to herself: "How could I have written such a letter? I was mad!"

## XV.

THE steamer which plies between Marseilles and Athens had reached Cape Malea, the farthest point of the mulberry-leaf which forms the lower part of Greece, and which has given it its modern name. Clouds, fogs, and frosts were left far behind. Darkness had given place to light; cold to warmth. To the gray tints of the sky of the Occident had succeeded the azure of that of the Orient, and the deep, blue sea undulated in gentle ripples, stirred by a favorable breeze, which the steamer took advantage of, spreading its sails, so blackened by smoke that they were like those sombre-colored ones which Theseus inadvertently hoisted on his return from the Isle of Crete, after he had slain the minotaur. February was near its end, and already the approach of spring, which is so slow in France, was making itself felt in this happy climate so loved by the sun. The air was so mild that the greater part of the passengers, now cured of their seasickness, remained on deck, watching the

shores, which loomed up through the blue, evening mists. Above the vaporous shadows emerged a mountain, still visible, and retaining upon its snow-covered summit the last rays of the departing day. The peak was Taygetos, which furnished an opportunity to those travelers who had received a collegiate education, and knew a few odds and ends of Latin, to recite, with self-satisfied pedantry, Virgil's familiar verses. It is a rare thing for a Frenchman to quote, pertinently, a Latin verse, and when he does, he is very near perfect happiness. To quote a Greek verse is a felicity reserved for Germans and Englishmen, who are graduates of Jena or Oxford.

Seated upon the light benches and folding-chairs which encumbered the stern of the vessel were young English girls, dressed in long ulsters with immense buttons, and turban hats wrapped about with blue veils. Their traveling-bags were slung across their shoulders, confined by a leather strap; and they contemplated the shores, now dim in the evening shadows, through field-glasses strong enough to distinguish the satellites of Jupiter. Some of the more hardy among them, who had become

accustomed to the motion of the vessel, walked the deck with that practiced, regular step which professors of pedestrianism, old military sergeants, teach the young ladies across the Channel. Others were chatting with gentlemen, who were arrayed in a most correct and irreproachable fashion in all respects. There were also some Frenchmen, pupils of the School of Athens—painters and architects—who had won the Prix de Rome, and were on their way to drink deep draughts from the springs of the True and the Beautiful. These latter, with all the joyousness of youth, which has hope in the future and a little silver in the pocket, were jesting, laughing uproariously, smoking cigars, and indulging in warm discussions on esthetic subjects. The reputations of the great masters, ancient and modern, were discussed, questioned, torn into shreds; everything was wonderful or ridiculous, sublime or stupid; for young people are apt to rush to extremes, and they know no middle course, no moderate phrases. They are not ones to wed King *Modus* to Queen *Ratio;* this marriage of convenience is never made until later in life.

In the midst of this group, draped in his

mantle like a philosopher of the Porticus, was a young man who was neither painter, sculptor, nor architect, and yet whom the traveling artists selected as a judge whenever their discussions ended in obstinacy on both sides. This young man was Guy de Malivert. His remarks were so keen and well-poised that they showed a veritable connoisseur, an art critic worthy of the name, and the supercilious young men who looked down upon all who had handled neither brush, chisel, nor drawing-pen, listened to his opinions with a certain deference, and sometimes even went so far as to adopt them.

The conversation grew wearisome at last, as does everything, even a discussion of the real and the ideal, and the young orators, whose throats were rather dry, descended to the cabin to wet their larynxes with grog or some other hot and grateful drink. Malivert was left alone on the deck. The twilight was over, and the shades of night had fallen. In the azure darkness of the heavens, the stars burned with a brilliancy and splendor that can only be realized if one has seen the skies of Greece. Their lustre was reflected upon the water in long,

wavy lines, like those made by lights upon the shore; the foam churned by the vessel's wheels spouted up in millions of diamonds, which flashed an instant and then melted away in streaks of steely phosphorescence. The black hull of the steamer seemed to swim in a bath of light. It was a spectacle which would have excited the admiration of the most obtuse Philistine, and Malivert, who was not a Philistine, thoroughly enjoyed it. He never thought of such a thing as following the others to the cabin, where there is always a sickening closeness, especially noticeable to one coming in from the fresh air; but he continued to pace the deck from stern to bow, threading his way amidst the Levantines who were lying upon carpets or light mattresses spread amidst the mass of chains and cordage, and the unexpected sight of whom occasionally startled some woman who had come on deck to breathe the fresh night air.

Guy, as we see, was keeping the promise he had made not to compromise Madame d'Ymbercourt. He leaned against the bulwark and abandoned himself to the sweetest of reveries. Since Spirite's love had disengaged his mind

from earthly interests, the voyage to Greece no longer inspired him with the same enthusiasm as formerly. The journey he longed to take was a far different one, but he no longer thought of hurrying his departure for that world where his heart already was. He knew now the consequences of suicide, and he possessed his soul in patience until the hour should come for him to take wing with the angel whose presence was ever about him. Assured of his future happiness, he abandoned himself to the enjoyment of the present, and reveled like a poet in the superb beauty of the night. Like Lord Byron, he loved the sea. Its eternal unrest and its murmuring, which is never silent, even in its calmest hours; its sudden revolts and insensate fury against the immovable, had always appealed to his imagination, which saw in this profitless turbulence a covert analogy with the futility of human effort. What especially charmed him in the sea, however, were the complete isolation, the circle of the horizon always the same and yet always changing, the solemn monotony, and the absence of all sign of civilization. The same swell of the

waters which raised the steamer on its undulating waves had once bathed, although no trace was left behind, the vessels with "hollow flanks," of which Homer speaks. The water had precisely the same tint that colored it when ploughed by the Grecian fleet. Unlike the land, the sea, in its pride, emerges unscarred from the passage of man. It is vast, deep, and unconfined, like the infinite. And Malivert had never felt freer, more lighthearted, more in possession of all his faculties, than when, erect upon the prow of the ship, now rising, now sinking, he advanced into the unknown. Wet with the foam thrown up on the deck, his hair impregnated with the salty vapor, it seemed to him that he was flying over the waves, and as a horseman becomes identified with the swiftness of his steed, so he gave himself all credit for the speed of the vessel, and his thoughts flew forward across the waters.

Like a feather or a flake of snow, Spirite had descended noiselessly to Malivert's side, and her hand rested upon the young man's shoulder. Although she would have been invisible to any bystander, we may be permitted to imagine the exquisite group formed by Mali-

vert and his aerial friend. The moon had risen round and clear, paling the stars, and the night had become a sort of azure day, the light that of a blue grotto, and of a tone magical in its effect. The rays fell upon the prow of the ship where stood our Cupid and Psyche, radiant amidst the diamond-pointed scintillation of the foam, like young gods at the prow of an ancient bireme. Over the sea, in a continual luminous tremor, was spread out a broad track spangled with silver, the reflection of the queen of the night emerging from the horizon and mounting slowly into the heavens. Occasionally, the black back of a dolphin—a descendant, perhaps, of the one which bore Arion—would loom up across the sparkling pathway, and vanish again in the shadows beyond; or, far in the distance, like a swaying red point, would be revealed the head-light of some bark. Now and then the shores of an island, cut in violet against the sky, would appear and glide slowly past, to be lost again in the distance.

"It is a marvelous spectacle," said Spirite; "one of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful, that it is permitted to a human eye to contemplate; but what is it in comparison

with the wonderful scenes of the world I have left to descend to you, and where we shall soon fly side by side, 'like doves impelled by the same desire?' This sea, which seems to you so grand, is only a drop in the cup of the infinite; and that pale planet which lights it is lost in the immensity of space, an imperceptible globule of silver, the smallest grain of the siderial sands. Oh! how, standing by your side, I would have admired this sight, when I still inhabited the earth and was called Lavinia! But do not think I remain insensible to it now; I can understand its beauty through your emotion."

"How impatient you make me for the other life, Spirite," responded Malivert, "and with what ardor do I long for those worlds of splendors, dazzling beyond all expression or thought, where we will live together, and nothing shall ever separate us more."

"You will see them; you will know all their magnificence, all the delights they can give, if you love me, if you are faithful to me, if your thoughts never turn toward anything base, if, as to the bottom of a still, deep pool of water, you let fall into your lowest depths all human

grossness and impurity. On these conditions we shall be allowed, eternally united to one another, to taste the calm delights of divine love, that love which knows no fracture, no weakness, no satiety, and whose ardor would melt suns like grains of myrrh in a flame. To deserve supreme felicity, think of Spirite, who is in Heaven, and not too much of Lavinia, who sleeps beneath her white wreath of sculptured roses."

"Do I not love you madly!" exclaimed Malivert, "with all the purity and all the ardor of which a soul still bound to this earth can be capable?"

"My friend," answered Spirite, "continue as you are; I am content with you."

And as she spoke these words, her starry, sapphire eyes were full of loving promises, and a smile, passionately chaste, parted her exquisite lips.

The interview between the living and the spirit was prolonged until the first rays of the dawn had begun to mingle their rose-colored tints with the violet hues of the moon, whose disk was gradually becoming effaced. Soon a segment of the sun appeared above the bar of

dusky blue which the sea formed on the horizon, and the day broke with a sublime display of pyrotechnics. Spirite, angel of light, had nothing to fear from the sun, and she remained a few minutes longer upon the prow, dazzlingly beautiful in the roseate light, with the flaming rays of the morning playing like golden butterflies upon her hair, ruffled by the breeze of the Archipelago. Although she preferred to appear in the night-time, it was because the movement of ordinary human life being then suspended, Guy was freer, less observed, and ran no risk of appearing crazy by actions which, from an external point of view, would seem peculiar.

When she saw that Malivert was white and shivering in the chill of the morning, she said to him in a tone of gentle chiding: "Do not struggle against nature, poor creature of clay; it is cold, and the decks and cordage are soaked with the salt spray. Return to the cabin and sleep." Then she added, with a grace wholly feminine: "Sleep does not separate us. I shall be with you in your dreams, and will bear you away to that place where you can not go while you are awake."

And, indeed, Guy's sleep was full of rose-colored, radiant, supernatural dreams, in which, side by side with Spirite, he floated through Paradise and Elysium, a commingling of ideal architecture and foliage and brilliant color of which no words of our poor tongue, so limited, imperfect, and obscure, could give the most distant idea.

It is useless to describe the rest of Guy's voyage in detail; that would not come within the province of this story, and, besides, Guy, occupied with his love and overwhelmed with an unquenchable longing, paid much less attention than formerly to material things; he saw in nature now only a vague, misty, beautiful background for the one idea which consumed him. The world was for him only the landscape of the picture in which Spirite was the single figure, and he considered the most beautiful bits of scenery but little worthy of serving in that capacity.

Still, the next morning, at daybreak, he could not repress an exclamation of delighted surprise when, as the steamer entered the bay of Piræus, he discovered the marvelous picture displayed in the sunshine—the amethyst-

tinted peaks of Parnes and Hymettus on either side, and in the background, Lykabettos and the broken outlines of Pentelicus. In the foreground, like a tripod of gold upon an altar of marble, rose, above the Acropolis, the Parthenon illumined by the crimson rays of the rising sun; the bluish hues of the distant landscape appeared through the interstices of the crumbling columns, and rendered still more ethereal and ideal the noble proportions of the temple. Malivert felt that emotion which an appreciation of the beautiful always causes, and he understood much that had hitherto seemed obscure to him. All the art of the Greeks was revealed in that fleeting vision—the perfect proportion of all the parts, the absolute purity of the lines, and the matchless tone of the coloring, a blending of white, azure, and sunlight.

As soon as he had disembarked, without troubling himself about his luggage, which he left Jack to look after, he leaped into one of those cabs which, to the shame of modern civilization, take the place of the ancient chariots, and carry travelers from the Piræus to Athens, over a road white with dust, and bordered here

and there with a few dingy olive-trees. The vehicle which Malivert had taken was rickety, and rattled in all its joints; it was dragged on the gallop by two little dappled gray horses, with their manes cut short and standing up like a hair-brush; they might have been the skeletons, or rather the clay models, of the horses which prance in marble upon the platform of the Parthenon; their ancestors had doubtless posed for Phidias. They were driven, with wild whirls of the whip, by a youth clothed in a costume which might have been worn by Palicarus, who, perhaps the conductor of a more brilliant equipage, once won the prize for chariot-racing in the Olympian games.

Leaving the other travelers to invade the Hôtel d'Angleterre, Guy proceeded to the foot of the sacred hill, where human genius, in all its flower of youth, poetry, and love, collected together its finest masterpieces, as if to challenge the admiration of the gods. He mounted the old Street of the Tripods, now encumbered with ugly hovels, treading with a respectful step upon the dust formed by the crumbling away of marvels, and finally came out upon the steps of the Propylæa, which have been

raised a little to allow of the burial of the dead beneath; he crossed this strange cemetery among a confused mass of marble slabs, with the little temple of "The Wingless Victory" on one side, and on the other the pedestal of the equestrian statue of Cimon and the Pinacothecus, where are preserved the works of Zeuxis, Apelles, Timanthus, and Protogenes.

He passed through the Propylæa of Mnesicles, a masterpiece worthy to serve as a gateway to the divine achievement of Ictinus and Phidias, with a feeling of awed admiration; he was almost ashamed—he, a barbarian of the Occident—to walk shod with leather upon this sacred soil.

A few steps, however, brought him to the Parthenon—the Temple of the Virgin—the sanctuary of Pallas-Athene, the purest conception of polytheism. The structure rose into the serene blue of the atmosphere, superbly calm, majestically beautiful. A divine harmony reigned in its lines, which, in a secret rhythm, seemed to sing the hymn of beauty. All the parts of the edifice were directed toward an unknown ideal, converged to a mysterious point, but without effort, without

violence, and as if sure of attaining their aim. Above the temple, one could imagine suspended the perfected idea toward which the angles of the pediments, the entablatures, and the columns aspired and tried to reach, taking in their course imperceptible curves, perpendicularly and horizontally. The beautiful Doric columns, leaning a little backward, with their flutings like folds of drapery, conjured up visions of chaste virgins, consumed by a vague longing, an indefinable desire.

A warm, yellow color encompassed the edifice in an atmosphere of gold, and under the kiss of time, the marble had taken a pinkish tint, as if modestly blushing.

Upon the steps of the temple, between the two columns behind which opens the door of the Pronaos, stood Spirite, proudly erect in the brilliancy of the Grecian sunshine, so little favorable to apparitions, and on the very threshold of the Parthenon, so perfect in its luminous beauty. A long, white robe, draped in little folds like the tunics of the canephori, descended from her shoulders to her tiny, bare feet. A wreath of violets—those violets the freshness of which Aristophanes celebrates in

one of his comedies—crowned the rippling waves of her golden hair. Thus costumed, Spirite resembled one of the virgins of the Panathenæan Festival descended from its frieze. But in her eyes, blue as the forget-me-not, shone a tender light, which is not to be found in eyes of marble. To all the radiant beauty of the sculptured image, she added the beauty of the soul.

Guy mounted the steps and approached Spirite, who held out her hand to him. Then, in a sudden burst of light, he saw the Parthenon as it was in the days of its splendor. The fallen columns were restored to their former positions; the figures of the friezes, which had been taken away by Lord Elgin, or broken by Venetian bombs, were grouped again in their divinely human attitudes. Through the doorway of the Cella, Malivert saw, replaced upon its pedestal, Phidias' statue of ivory and gold, the celestial, the virgin, the immaculate Pallas-Athene; but upon this miracle he cast only a passing glance, and then his eyes immediately sought those of Spirite. Treated with such disdain, the vision of the past vanished.

"Ah!" murmured Spirite, "art itself is

forgotten for love. His soul is becoming more and more detached from earth. Soon, dear one, thy desire shall be fulfilled."

And the heart of the young girl beating still in the breast of the spirit, a happy sigh stirred the white folds of her peplum.

## XVI.

A FEW days after his visit to the Parthenon, Malivert determined to make an excursion into the environs of Athens, and inspect the beautiful mountains that were visible from his window. He took a guide and two horses, and left Jack behind at the hotel, because he knew that he would be of no use, and even a source of annoyance. Jack was one of those servants who are more difficult to satisfy than their masters, and who are especially disagreeable upon a journey. He was as fussy as an old maid, and found everything detestable—the rooms, the beds, the food, and the wine; and every moment he would inveigh against the awkwardness of the service, characterizing the entire force of the hotel as savages. Besides this, although he gave Malivert credit for some talent as a writer, he considered him incapable of taking care of himself, and even a trifle crazy, especially of late days, and he therefore determined to watch him closely. A frown from Malivert, however, soon nipped

this project in the bud, and the mentor, with a wonderful facility for metamorphosis, returned to the rôle of valet.

Guy deposited a certain number of gold pieces in a leather belt which he wore beneath his garments, placed a brace of pistols in the holsters of his saddle, and rode away, assigning no fixed day for his return, as he wished to be free to take advantage of anything unforeseen that might turn up. He knew that Jack, who was accustomed to his disappearances, would not be alarmed if his return were delayed several days, or even weeks, but would remain at the hotel in perfect serenity of mind as soon as he had taught the cook how to broil a beefsteak in accordance with his ideas—well done on one side and rare on the other.

Guy's intention was, unless something should occur to make him change his mind, to go no further than Mount Parnes, and to be absent no longer than five or six days. But, at the end of a month, neither he nor his guide had returned. There had been no letter received from him at the hotel announcing any alteration in his plans; the money he had taken with him must have been exhausted by this

time, and his silence was beginning to be alarming.

"Monsieur does not send for any money," thought Jack one morning, while eating a beef-steak at last cooked to a turn, and which he washed down with a bottle of white wine from the island of Santorini, agreeable enough to the taste, in spite of its slight flavor of rosin. "It is very strange; something must have happened to him. If he had decided to continue his journey, he would have sent me word where to forward him funds. I hope he hasn't fallen over some precipice and broken his neck. What a queer idea it is to go galloping about through dirty, ugly countries, where there is nothing fit to eat, when we might be in Paris, comfortably settled in a pleasant place, out of the reach of musquitoes and other beastly insects that cover you with blisters! Of course, in the summer-time, I can imagine one going to Ville d'Avray, Saint Cloud, or Fontainebleau —no, not Fontainebleau, there are too many painters there—and yet I like Paris better. There is no use in talking about it, the country is fit only for peasants and journeys for commercial travelers. It isn't very pleasant to be

cooped up in the hotel of a city where there is nothing but ruins to see. Heavens, how stupid are people like my master, with their love for old stones, as if new, fresh buildings were not a thousand times more agreeable to look at! Monsieur de Malivert certainly shows very little consideration for me. Of course, I am his valet, and it is my duty to serve him; but he has no right to leave me to be bored to death in this wretched place! If any misfortune has happened to my master—for, after all, he is a good master—I shall never be consoled unless I find a better place. I have a good mind to go and hunt for him, if I only knew where to look. But who knows where his fancy has led him to go? How could I find him in those ridiculous places amongst the precipices and swamps that he calls picturesque, and sketches in his note-book. Well, I will give him three days more to return home, and if he has not turned up by that time, I will have him cried through all the streets and posted on all the walls like a lost dog, with the promise of a handsome reward to anyone who shall bring him back."

As a modern, cold-blooded servant, who felt

it his duty to jeer at the devoted and faithful domestic of the olden times, honest Jack tried to cover up his real anxiety. As a matter of fact, he was warmly attached to Guy de Malivert, and although he knew that he was down in his master's will for a sum that would assure him a modest competency, he did not desire his death.

The landlord was beginning to exhibit some uneasiness, not on account of Malivert, whose bill was paid, but on account of the two horses he had furnished for the expedition. As he lamented the probable fate of these two unequaled animals, who were so gentle, so sure-footed, so tender-mouthed that one could guide them with a silken thread, Jack, losing his patience, said to him with an air of superb disdain: "Well, if your miserable nags have been smashed to pieces, you will be paid for them!" an assurance which at once calmed the fears of brave Diamantopoulos.

Every evening, the wife of the guide, a handsome, robust matron, who might have replaced one of the caryatides taken away from the Pandrosion, came to ask if Stavros, her husband, had returned, either with or without the trav-

eler. After receiving a response, which was invariably in the negative, she sat down on a stone at a short distance from the hotel, undid the false, blonde switch which crowned her black hair, letting the locks stream over her shoulders, placed her nails against her cheeks as if she intended to scratch herself, uttered deep groans, and indulged in all the theatrical demonstrations of grief which were peculiar to the ancients. In reality, she was not deeply affected, for Stavros was a miserable, drunken sort of fellow, who beat her when he was in his cups, and contributed but little money to the household expenses, although he made considerable showing foreigners about; still, she owed it to the proprieties to manifest a sufficient amount of despair. This real or assumed sorrow, expressed in hoarse sobs which recalled the moanings of Hecuba, greatly annoyed and troubled Jack, who, although an unbeliever, was a little superstitious. "I don't like that woman," he said, "who howls like a dog that scents death." And as the three days which he had set as the extreme limit he would wait for Malivert's return had expired, he laid the circumstances of the case before the police.

The most thorough search was made in the direction that Malivert and his guide had probably taken. The mountain was beaten on all sides, and in a road which ran through a ravine was found the carcass of a horse, lying on its side, completely despoiled of its harness, and already half eaten by crows. A bullet had broken its shoulder, and the animal must have fallen as soon as struck, and dragged its rider down at the same time. The ground around the place where the dead beast lay seemed to have been trampled in a struggle; but several weeks must have elapsed since the presumed attack, and it was impossible to draw deductions of any value from the foot-prints, which had been half effaced by the rain and wind. In a clump of mastic-trees, near the road, a branch had been broken by the passage of some projectile, and it hung down dead and covered with withered leaves.

The bullet, which was that of a pistol, was found further on in a field. The person who had been attacked appeared to have defended himself. What had been the result of the fight? The only conclusion to be drawn was, that it had been fatal, since neither Malivert

nor his guide had reappeared. The horse was identified as one of those that Diamantopoulos had hired out to the young French traveler. But, for lack of more precise data, the examination could proceed no further. Every trace of the aggressors and of the victim, or rather victims—for there must have been two—was lost. The key to the enigma disappeared in the very beginning.

A detailed description of Malivert and Stavros was sent to every place where they might, by any possibility, have gone; but no one had seen them anywhere. Their journey had apparently come to an end at the spot where the horse was found. Perhaps Malivert had been carried by brigands to some inaccessible mountain cave for the purpose of ransom; but a little reflection showed that this supposition could not be correct. Had it been so, the brigands would have sent one of their number in disguise to the city, and found means to place in Jack's hands a letter containing the terms of the ransom, with a threat of mutilation in case of delay, and of death in case of refusal, as is their usual proceeding in cases of this sort. But nothing of the kind had occurred. No

paper of any description had come from the mountain to Athens.

The idea of returning to France without his master greatly troubled Jack, for fear that he might be suspected of being the assassin, although he had not left the Hôtel d'Angleterre. He was at his wit's end, and more than ever did he rail at such journeys that took men into savage places, where robbers in fancy costumes shot them down as if they were rabbits.

A few days after the search had been abandoned, who should appear at the hotel but Stavros; but, ye gods! in what a condition!—pale, emaciated, haggard, dirty, like a spectre emerged from the grave without shaking off the earth. His rich, picturesque costume, of which he had been so vain, and which produced such a good effect upon travelers who were fond of local color, had been taken away from him, and replaced with sordid rags, all begrimed with mud and dirt; a greasy sheep-skin covered his shoulders, and no one would have recognized him as the favorite guide of tourists. His unexpected return was reported to the police, and he was arrested; for, although well known in Athens, and relatively honest, he had

departed with a traveler and returned alone, a circumstance which the scrupulous guardians of the peace naturally considered suspicious. However, Stavros was able to demonstrate his innocence. His occupation as a guide was logically opposed to the idea that he would make way with the travelers from whom he derived his income; and, besides, there was no need for him to assassinate them in order to rob them. Why should he attack men who followed him of their own free will, and handed over to him their gold, or, at all events, a sufficient portion of it? But the story he told of Malivert's death was most extraordinary, and very difficult to believe. According to him, while they were riding peacefully along the ravine road, at the place where the carcass of the horse had been found, suddenly they were startled by the report of a fire-arm, followed almost immediately by another. The first shot killed the horse that Malivert was riding, and the second struck the traveler himself. Before he fell, however, he snatched one of his pistols from the holsters, and fired at random.

In another moment, three or four bandits dashed out of the bushes to despoil their vic-

tim. Two others compelled Stavros to descend from his horse, and held him by the arms, although he made no resistance, knowing that it would be useless.

Up to this point the recital differed but slightly from the ordinary tales of highway robbery; but what followed was far less credible, although the guide affirmed under oath that it was true. He declared that, close to the dying Malivert, whose face, instead of being contracted with agony, was radiant with a celestial happiness, suddenly appeared a figure of dazzling whiteness and marvelous beauty, who might have been the Panagia herself, and who placed upon the traveler's wound, as if to ease his suffering, a hand that glowed with a soft radiance. The brigands, frightened at the apparition, fled some distance away, and then the beautiful lady took the soul of the dead man and flew away with it to the skies.

It was impossible to make him vary in the slightest degree from this story. The body of the traveler was hidden by the brigands under a rock on the bank of a stream whose bed, always dry in summer, was filled with laurel roses. As for Stavros himself, as he was

not worth the trouble of killing, after stripping him of his handsome clothes, the outlaws carried him away into the mountains, so that he should not be able to denounce the murder, and it was with great difficulty that he finally succeeded in effecting his escape.

Stavros was released; if he had been guilty, it would have been easy for him to gain the Isles or the shores of Asia with Malivert's money. His return proved his innocence. The story of Malivert's death was forwarded to Madame de Marillac, his sister, in almost the same words that Stavros had related it. The appearance of Spirite was even mentioned, but as an hallucination produced by the terror of the guide, whose brain did not appear to be very strong.

At almost the same hour in which the murder upon Mount Parnes took place, Baron de Féroë had retired, as was his habit, to the privacy of his apartments, and was engaged in reading that strange, mysterious work of Swedenborg's, which is entitled "Marriages of the Other Life."

In the midst of his reading, he felt a pecul-

iar sensation, a sort of warning of some revelation that was about to take place. Although there was no apparent reason for it, the thought of Malivert crossed his brain. The room was suddenly flooded with light, the walls became transparent, and opened like a hypethral temple, showing an immense depth of space, not the Heaven which human eyes are wont to gaze upon, but the Heaven which is pervious to the eyes of faith alone.

In the centre of an effervescence of light which seemed to come from the heart of the infinite, two points of an intensity of splendor greater still, scintillated, pulsated, and swayed gradually nearer, taking the appearance of Malivert and Spirite. They flew one near the other, in celestial, radiant joy, caressing one another with the tips of their wings.

Soon they came together, closer and closer still, until, like two drops of dew gliding along the same petal of a lily, they were finally merged into one single pearl.

"Behold, they are happy forever; their souls united form an angel of love!" murmured Baron de Féroë, with a melancholy smile. "And I—how long have I still to wait?"