



# Short Story Classics



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## **The Deluge at Norderney**

**by Isak Dinesen  
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DURING the first quarter of the last century, seaside resorts became the fashion, even in those countries of Northern Europe within the minds of whose people the sea had hitherto held the rôle of the devil, the cold and voracious hereditary foe of humanity. The romantic spirit of the age, which delighted in ruins, ghosts, and lunatics, and counted a stormy night on the heath and a deep conflict of the passions a finer treat for the connoisseur than the ease of the salon and the harmony of a philosophic system,



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reconciled even the most refined individuals to the eternal wildness of the coast scenery and of the open seas. Ladies and gentlemen of fashion abandoned the shade of their parks to come and walk upon the bleak shores and watch the untameable waves. The neighborhood of a shipwreck, where, in low tide, the wreck was still in sight, like a hardened, black, and salted skeleton, became a favorite picnic place, where fair artists put up their easels.

On the west coast of Holstein the bath of Norderney thus sprang up and flowered for a period of twenty years. Along the sandy roads of the downs fine carriages and coaches came, to unload trunks and cartons, and ladies on small feet, whose veils and chenilles blew about them in the fresh breeze, in front of neat little hotels and cottages. The Duke of Augustenburg, with his beautiful wife and his sister, who was a fine wit, and the Prince of Noer honored the place with their presence. The landed nobility of Schleswig-Holstein, with pins and needles in their legs from the new political stir, and the representatives of old Hamburg and Lübeck merchant houses, worth their weight in gold, together undertook the pilgrimage into the heart of nature. The peasants and fishermen of Norderney themselves



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learned to look upon the terrible and faithless gray monster westward of them as upon some kind *maître de plaisir*.

Here was a promenade, a club, and a pavilion, the rendezvous in the long summer evenings of many sweet colors and sounds. Ladies with marriageable daughters, over whose heads barren seasons of the courts and towns had washed, now watched fruitful courtships ripen on the sunny beach. Young dandies managed their mounts on the long sands in front of clear eyes. Old gentlemen dug themselves down into political and dynastic discussions in the club, their glasses of fine rum at their sides; and their young wives walked, their cashmeres on their arms, to a lonely hollow in the downs, still sun-baked from the long summer day, to become one with nature, with the lyme grass and the little wind-blown pansies, and to gaze straight up at the full moon, high in the pale summer sky. The very air had here in its embrace a scornful vigor which incited and renewed the heart. Heinrich Heine, who visited the bath, held that the persevering smell of fish which clung to them would in itself be enough to protect the virtue of the young fishermaidens of Norderney. But there were other nostrils and hearts to which the rank briny smell was intoxicating, even as the

smell of gunpowder over the battle field. There was even a small casino, where the coquetry with the dangerous powers of existence could be carried on in a different measure. At times there were great balls, and on fine summer evenings the orchestra played upon the terrace.

"You do not know," said the Princess of Augustenburg to Herr Gottingen, "what a place this is for making you clean. That sea breeze has blown straight through my bonnet and my clothes, and through the very flesh and the bones of me, until my heart and spirit are swept, sun-dried, and salted."

"With Attic salt, I have noticed," said Herr Gottingen, and, looking at her, he added in his heart: "God, yes. Precisely like a split cod."

In the late summer of 1835 a terrible disaster took place at the bath of Norderney. After a three days' storm from the southwest, the wind sprang around to the north. This is a thing that happens only once in a hundred years. The tremendous mass of water driven up by the storm was turned and pressed down in the corner, upon the Westerlands. The sea broke the dikes in two places and washed through them. Cattle and sheep were drowned by the hundred. Farmhouses and barns came down like card castles before the advancing waters, and

many human lives were lost even as far as Wilsum and Wredon.

It began with an evening of more than ordinarily heavenly calm, but of stifling air and a strange, luminous, sulphurous dimness. There was no distinguishable line of division between the sky and the sea. The sun went down in a confusion of light, itself a dull red like the target upon the promenade. The waves seemed of a curious substance, like jellyfish washing up on the shore. It was a highly inspiring evening; many things happened at Norderney. That night the people who were not kept awake by the beating of their own hearts woke up, terrified, by a new, swiftly approaching roar. Could their sea sing now in this voice?

In the morning the world was changed, but none knew into what. In this noise nobody could talk, or even think. What the sea was doing you could not tell. Your clothes were already whipped off you before you got in sight of the sand, and the salt foam whirled sky high. Long and towering waves came in behind it, each more powerful than the last. The air was cold and bitter.

The rumor of a ship run aground four miles to the north reached the bath, but nobody ventured out to see it. Old General von Brackel, who had seen

the occupation of East Prussia by Napoleon's armies in 1806, and old Professor Schmiegelow, the physician to the princely house of Coburg, who had been in Naples at the time of the cholera, walked out a little together, and from a small hill watched the scenery, both quite silent. It was not till Thursday that the flood came. By then the storm was over.

By this time, also, there were not many people left at Norderney. The season had been drawing to a close, and many of the most illustrious guests had gone before the time of the storm. Now most of the remaining visitors made haste to depart. The young women pressed their faces to the window panes of their coaches, wild to catch a last glimpse of the wild scenery. It seemed to them that they were driving away from the one real place and hour of their lives. But when the grand coach of Baron Goldstein, of Hamburg, was blown straight off the road on the dike, it was realized that the time for quick action had come. Everybody went off as speedily as possible.

It was during these hours, the last of the storm and the first of the following night, that the sea broke the dikes. The dikes, made to resist a heavy pressure from seaward, could not hold when sapped from the east. They gave way along a stretch of half a

mile, and through the opening the sea came in.

The farmers were awakened by the plaintive bellowing of their animals. Swinging their feet out of bed, in the dark, they put them down in a foot of cold, muddy water. It was salt. It was the same water which rolled, out to the west, a hundred fathoms deep, and washed the white feet of the cliffs of Dover. The North Sea had come to visit them. It was rising quickly. In an hour the movables of the low farmhouses were floating on the water, knocking against the walls. As the dawn came, the people, from the roofs of their houses, watched the land around them change. Trees and bushes were growing in a moving gray ground, and thick yellow foam was washing over the stretches of their ripening corn, the harvest of which they had been discussing on the last days before the storm.

There had been such floods before. A few old people could still recount to the young how they had once been snatched from their beds and hurled upon rafts by their pale mothers, and had seen, from the collapsing houses, the cattle struggle and go under in dark water; and how breadwinners had perished and households had been ruined and lost. The sea did such things from time to time. Still, this flood lived long in the memory of the coast. By coming on in summer

time, the deluge assumed the character of a terrible, grim joke. In the annals of the province, where it kept a place and a name of its own, it was called the flood of the Cardinal.

This was because in the midst of their misery the terror-stricken people got support from one already half-mythical figure, and felt at their side the presence of a guardian angel. Many years after, in the minds of the peasants, it seemed that his company in their dark despair had shed a great white light over the black waves.

The Cardinal Hamilcar von Sehestedt had, during the summer, been living in a small fisherman's house at some distance from the bath, to collect his writings of many years in a book upon the Holy Ghost. With Joachim de Flora, who was born in 1202, the Cardinal held that while the book of the Father is given in the Old Testament, and that of the Son, in the New, the testament of the Third Person of the Trinity still remained to be written. This he had made the task of his life. He had grown up in the Westerlands, and had preserved, during a long life of travels and spiritual work, his love for the coast scenery and the sea. In his leisure hours he would go, after the example of St. Peter himself, a long way out on the sea with the fishermen in their boats, to watch their work. He



had with him in his cottage only a sort of valet or secretary, a man by the name of Kasparson. This man was a former actor and adventurer, a brilliant fellow in his way, who spoke many languages and had been given to all sorts of studies. He was devoted to the Cardinal, but he seemed a curious Sancho Panza for the noble knight of the church.

The name of Hamilcar von Sehestedt was at that time famous all over Europe. He had been made a Cardinal three years before, when he was only seventy. He was a strange flower upon the old solid wood of the Sehestedt family tree. An old noble race of the province had lived for many hundred years for nothing but wars and their land, to produce him. The one remarkable thing about them was that they had stuck, through many trials, to the ancient Roman Catholic faith of the land. They had no mobility of spirit to change what they had once got into their heads. The Cardinal had nine brothers and sisters, none of whom had shown any evidences of a spiritual life. It was as if some slowly gathered and quite unused store of intellectuality in the tribe had come out in this one child of it. Perhaps a woman, imported from outside, had dropped a thought into the blood of it before becoming altogether a Sehestedt, or

some idea in a book had impressed itself upon a young boy before he had been taught that books and ideas mean nothing, and all this had mounted up.

The extraordinary talents of young Hamilcar had been recognized, not by his own people, but by his tutor, who had been tutor to the Crown Prince of Denmark himself. He succeeded in taking the boy off to Paris and Rome. Here this new light of genius suddenly flared up in a clear blaze, impossible to ignore. There existed a tale of how the Pope himself, after the young priest had been presented to him, had seen in a dream how this youth had been set apart by providence to bring back the great Protestant countries under the Holy See. Still, the church had tried the young man severely, distrustful of many of the ideas and powers in him, of his visionary gift, and of the most striking feature of his nature: an immense capacity for pity which embraced not only the sinful and miserable but seemed to turn even toward the high and holy of the world. Their severity did not hurt him; obedience was in his nature. To his great power of imagination he joined a deep love of law and order. Perhaps in the end these two sides of his nature came to the same thing: to him everything seemed possible, and equally likely to fall in with the beautiful and

harmonious scheme of things.

The Pope himself, later, said of him: "If, after the destruction of our present world, I were to charge one human being with the construction of a new world, the only person whom I would trust with this work would be my young Hamilcar."

Whereupon, however, he quickly crossed himself two or three times.

The young Cardinal, after the church had handled him, came out a man of the world in the old sense of the word, but in a new and greater proportion. He moved with the same ease and grace amongst kings and outcasts. He had been sent to the missionary monasteries of Mexico, and had had great influence with the Indian and half-caste tribes there. One thing about him impressed the world everywhere: wherever he went, it was believed of him that he could work miracles. At the time of his stay in Norderney the hardened and heavy coast people took to thinking strange things of him. After the flood it was said by many that he had been seen to walk upon the waves.

He may have felt handicapped in this feat, for he was nearly killed at the very start of events. When the fishermen from the hamlet, as the flood came on, ran to his assistance, they found his cottage already half a ruin. In the fall of it the

man Kasparson had been killed. The Cardinal himself was badly wounded, and wore, all during his rescue work, a long, blood-stained bandage wound about his head.

In spite of this the old man worked all day with undaunted courage with the ruined people. The money that he had had with him he gave over to them. It was the first contribution to the funds which were afterward collected for the sufferers from all over Europe. Much greater still was the effect of his presence amongst them. He showed good knowledge of steering a boat. They did not believe that any vessel holding him could go down. On his command they rowed straight in amongst fallen buildings, and the women jumped into the boats from the house roofs, their children in their arms. From time to time he spoke to them in a strong and clear voice, quoting to them the book of Job. Once or twice, when the boat, hit by heavy floating timbers, came near to capsizing, he rose and held out his hand, and as if he had a magic power of balance, the boat steadied itself. Near a farmhouse a chained dog, on the top of its kennel, over which the sea was washing, pulled at its chain and howled, and seemed to have gone mad with fear. As one of the men tried to take hold of it, it bit him. The old Cardinal, turning the boat

a little, spoke to the dog and loosened its chain. The dog sprang into the boat. Whining, it squeezed itself against the old man's legs, and would not leave him.

Many peasant households had been saved before anybody thought of the bath. This was strange, as the rich and gay life out there had played a big part in the minds of the population. But in the hour of danger old ties of blood and life were stronger than the new fascination. At the baths they would have light boats for pleasure trips, but few people who knew how to maneuver them. It was not till noon that the heavier boats were sent out, advancing fathom-high over the promenade.

The place where the boats unloaded, on their return landward, was a windmill which, built on a low slope and a half-circular bastion of big stones, gave them access to lay to. From the other side of it you could somehow move on by road. Here, at a distance, horses and carts had been brought up. The mill itself made a good landmark, her tall wings standing up, hard and grim, a tumbledown big black cross against a tawny sky. A crowd of people was collected here waiting for the boats. As they came in from the baths for the first time there were no tears of welcome and reunion, for these people they carried, luxuriously dressed even

in their panic, with heavy caskets on their knees, were strangers. The last boat brought news that there were still, out at Norderney, four or five persons for whom no place had been found in the boat.

The tired boatmen looked at one another. They knew the tide and high sea out there, and they thought: We will not go. Cardinal Hamilcar was standing in a group of women and children, with his back to the men, but as if he could read their hardening faces and hearts he became silent. He turned and looked at the newly arrived party. Even he seemed to tarry. Below the white bandages his eyes rested on them with a singular, a mysterious expression. He had not eaten all day; now he asked for something to drink, and they brought him a jug of the spirits of the province. Turning once more toward the water he said quietly, *Eh bien. Allons, allons.* The words were strange to the peasants, for they were terms used by the coachmen of the nobility, trained abroad, for their teams of four horses. As he walked down to the boat, and the people from the bath dispersed before him, some of the ladies suddenly and wildly clapped their hands. They meant no harm. Knowing heroism only from the stage, they gave it the stage's applause. But the old man whom they applauded stopped under

it for a moment. He bowed his head a little, with an exquisite irony, in the manner of a hero upon the stage. His limbs were so stiff that he had to be supported and lifted into the boat.

It was not till late on Thursday afternoon that the boat was again on its way back. A dead darkness had all day been lying upon the wide landscape. As far as the eye reached, what had been an undulating range of land was now nothing but an immense gray plane, alarmingly alive. Nothing seemed to be firm. To the crushed hearts of the men rowing over their cornfields and meadows, this movableness of what had been their foundation and foothold was unbearable, and they turned their eyes away from it. The clouds hung low upon the water. The small boat, moving heavily, seemed to be advancing upon a narrow horizontal course, squeezed in between the mass of weight below and what appeared to be a mass of weight above it. The four people lately rescued from the ruins of Norderney sat, white as corpses, in the stern.

The first of them was old Miss Nat-og-Dag, a maiden lady of great wealth, the last of the old illustrious race which carried arms two-parted in black and white, and whose name meant "Night and Day." She was close to sixty years, and her mind had for some years been confused, for

she, who was a lady of the strictest virtue, believed herself to be one of the great female sinners of her time. She had with her a girl of sixteen, the Countess Calypso von Platen Hallermund, the niece of the scholar and poet of that name. These two ladies, although they behaved in the midst of danger with great self-control, gave nevertheless that impression of wildness which, within a peaceful age and society, only the vanishing and decaying aristocracy can afford to maintain. To the rescuing party it was as if they had taken into the boat two tigresses, one old and one young, the cub quite wild, the old one only the more dangerous for having the appearance of being tamed. Neither of them was in the least afraid. While we are young the idea of death or failure is intolerable to us; even the possibility of ridicule we cannot bear. But we have also an unconquerable faith in our own stars, and in the impossibility of anything venturing to go against us. As we grow old we slowly come to believe that everything will turn out badly for us, and that failure is in the nature of things; but then we do not much mind what happens to us one way or the other. In this way a balance is obtained. Miss Malin Nat-og-Dag, while perfectly indifferent to what should become of her, was also, because of



the derangement of her mind, joining, to this advantage of her age, the privilege of youth, that simple and arrogant optimism which takes for granted that nothing can go wrong with it. It is even doubtful whether she believed that she could die. The girl of sixteen, pressed close to her, her dusky tresses loosened and blown about her, was taking in everything around her with ecstasy: the faces of her companions, the movements of the boat, the terrible, dull-brownish hue of the water below her, and was imagining herself to be a great divinity of the sea.

The third person of the rescued party was a young Dane, Jonathan Mærsk, who had been sent to Norderney by his doctor to recover from a severe attack of melancholia. The fourth was Miss Malin's maid, who lay in the bottom of the boat, too terrified to lift her face from the knees of her mistress.

These four people, so lately snatched out of the jaws of death, had not yet escaped his hold. As their boat, on its way landward, passed at a little distance the scattered buildings of a farm, of which only the roofs and upper parts of the walls appeared above the water, they caught sight of human beings making signs to them from the loft of one of these buildings. The peasant boatmen were surprised, for they were

certain that a barge had been sent to this place earlier in the day. Under the commanding glances of young Calypso, who had caught sight of children amongst the castaways, they changed their direction, and with difficulty approached the house. As they were drawing near, a small granary, of which only the roof was visible, suddenly gave in, fell, and disappeared noiselessly before their eyes. At this sight Jonathan Mærsk rose up in the boat. For a moment he tried to follow the dispersing bits of wreckage with his eyes. Then he sat down again, very pale. The boat grated along the wall of the farmhouse and at last found a holdfast in a projecting beam, which made it possible for them to communicate with the people in the hayloft. They found there two women, one old and one young, a boy of sixteen, and two small children, and learned that they had been visited by the rescuing barge about three hours before. But they had profited by it only to send off their cow and calf, and a small collection of poor farm goods, heroically remaining themselves with the rising waters around them. The old woman had even been offered a place in the barge, with the animals, but she had refused to leave her daughter and grandchildren.

The boat could not possibly hold an

additional load of five persons, and it had to be decided quickly who of the passengers should change places with the family of the farmhouse. Those who were left in the loft would have to remain there till the boat could return. Since it was already growing dark, and there was no chance of bringing a boat along until dawn, this would mean a wait of six or seven hours. The question was whether the house would hold out for so long.

The Cardinal, rising up in his fluttering dark cloak, said that he would stay in the loft. At these words the people in the boat were thrown into dark despair. They were afraid to come back without him. The boatmen let go their hold on the oars, laid their hands on him, and implored him to stay with them. But he would hear nothing, and explained to them that he would be as much in the hand of God here as anywhere else, even though perhaps under a different finger, and that it might have been for this that he had been sent out on this last journey. They saw that they could do nothing with him, and resigned themselves to their fate. Miss Malin then quickly pronounced herself determined to keep him company in the hayloft, and the girl would not leave her old friend. Young Jonathan Mærsk seemed to wake from a dream, and told them that he would come with

them. At the last moment Miss Malin's maid cried out that she would not leave her mistress, and the men were already lifting her from the bottom of the boat when her mistress cast upon her the sort of glance by which you judge whether a person is likely to make a satisfactory fourth at a game of cards. "My pussy," she said, "nobody wants you here. Besides, you are probably in the family way, and so must hold onto futurity, my poor girl. Good night, Mariechen."

It was not easy for the women to get from the boat into the loft. Miss Malin, though, was thin and strong, and the men lifted her and placed her in the doorway as one would plant a scarecrow in a field. The small and light girl followed her as lithely as a cat. The black dog, on seeing the Cardinal leave the boat, whined loudly and suddenly jumped from the rail to the loft, and the young girl hauled it in. It was now high time for the peasant family to get into the boat, but they would not go before they had, loudly weeping, kissed the hands of their relievers and piled blessings upon them. The old woman insisted on handing over to them a small stable lantern with a couple of spare tallow candles, a jug of water, and a keg of gin, together with a loaf of the hard black bread which the peasants of the Westerlands make.

The men in the boat shoved off, and in a moment a belt of brown water lay between the house and the boat.

From the door of the hayloft the derelicts watched the boat withdraw, very slowly, for it was heavily laden, across the heaving plane. The branches of tall poplars near the house floated upon the surface of the water and were washed about violently with it. The dark sky, which all day had lain like a leaden lid upon the world, suddenly colored deep down in the west, as if the lid had been lifted a little there, to a flaming red that was reflected in the sea below. All faces in the boat were turned toward the loft, and when they were nearly out of sight they lifted their arms in a farewell greeting. The Cardinal, standing in the doorway of the loft, solemnly raised his arms to them in a blessing. Miss Malin waved a little handkerchief. Soon the boat, fading from their sight, became one with the sea and the air.

As if they had been four marionettes, pulled by the same wire, the four people turned their faces to one another.

"How will he do to dance with?" a young girl asks herself, when, at the ball, the *Chapeau* is presented to her. She may even add: "How will he do as a beau, an *Épouseur*, the Intended of my life?"

"How will these

people do to die with?" the castaways of the hayloft, scrutinizing each other's faces, asked themselves. Miss Malin, always inclined toward a bright view of things, found herself satisfied with her partners.

The Cardinal gave expression to these thoughts. The old man stood for a little while in deep silence, as if it took him time to get used again to the steadiness of a house, after a day spent in boats upon the restless seas, and to an atmosphere of comparative quiet after long hours of incessant danger—for nothing was likely to happen here at the moment—to get used, also, after his work with the broken-hearted peasants and fishermen around him, to the company of his equals. Slowly his manner changed from that of a commander to that of a convive. He smiled at his companions.

"My sisters and my brother," he said, "I congratulate myself upon being amongst brave people. I am looking forward to what hours I shall, under the favor of God, spend with you here. Madame," he said to Miss Malin, "I am not surprised at your gallantry, for I know about your race. It was a Nat-og-Dag who, at Warberg, when the King's horse was shot under him, jumped from his own horse and handed it to the King, with the words: To the King, my horse; to

the enemy, my life; to the Lord, my soul.' It was a Svinhoved,<sup>1</sup> if I am not wrong—your great-great-grandfather—who, at the sea battle of Koege, rather than expose the rest of the Danish fleet to the danger of fire from his burning ship, chose to go on fighting with his last breath, until the fire reached the powder room, and he was blown up with his crew. Here," he said, looking around him at the loft, "I may say it: Blessed are the pure in blood, for they shall see—" He paused, reflecting upon his theme. "Death," he concluded. "They shall see, verily, the face of death. For this moment here, for us, our fathers were brought up, through the centuries, in skill of arms and loyalty to their king; and our mothers, in virtue."

He could have said nothing which would better have strengthened and inspired the hearts of the women, who were both fierce devils in racial pride. But young Jonathan Mærsk, the bourgeois amongst them, made a gesture as if of protest. Nevertheless he said nothing.

They closed the door of the loft, but as it was hanging loose, and kept knocking about, the Cardinal asked the women if they could not find something with which to tie it fast. The girl felt for the ribbon which had tied her hair, but it had blown away. Miss Malin then gracefully lifted her petticoat and took off a

long garter, embroidered with rosebuds. "The zenith in the career of a garter, My Lord," she said, "is generally in the loosening, not in the fastening, of it. On that account the sister of this ribbon, which is now being sanctified by your holy hand, lies in the vault of the Royal Mausoleum of Stuttgart."

"Madame," said the Cardinal, "you speak frivolously. Pray do not talk or think in that way. Nothing sanctifies, nothing, indeed, is sanctified, except by the play of the Lord, which is alone divine. You speak like a person who would pronounce half of the notes of the scale—say, *do*, *re* and *mi*—to be sacred, but *fa*, *sol*, *la*, and *si* to be only profane, while, Madame, no one of the notes is sacred in itself, and it is the music, which can be made out of them, which is alone divine. If your garter be sanctified by my feeble old hand, so is my hand by your fine silk garter. The lion lies in wait for the antelope at the ford, and the antelope is sanctified by the lion, as is the lion by the antelope, for the play of the Lord is divine. Not the bishop, or the knight, or the powerful castle is sacred in itself, but the game of chess is a noble game, and therein the knight is sanctified by the bishop, as the bishop by the queen. Neither would it be an advantage if the bishop were ambitious to acquire the higher virtues



of the queen, or the castle, those of the bishop. So are we sanctified when the hand of the Lord moves us to where he wants us to be. Here he may be about to play a fine game with us, and in that game I shall be sanctified by you, as you by any of us."

When the door of the loft was closed, the place became dark, but the little lantern on the floor shed a gentle light. The loft looked like a home to the hearts of the derelicts. It was as if they had lived here a long time. The farmers had lately harvested their hay, and half the loft was stacked with it. It smelled very sweet and made a clean and soft seat. The Cardinal, who was very tired, soon sank down into it, his long cloak spread around him on the floor. Miss Malin faced him from the opposite side of the lantern. The young girl sat next to her, her legs crossed, like a small oriental idol. The boy, when at last he sat down with them, took a seat upon a ladder which lay on the floor, and which raised him a little above the others. The dog kept close to the Cardinal. Sitting up, its ears back, from time to time it seemed, in a deep movement, to swallow its fear and loneliness. In these positions the party remained for most of the night. Indeed, the Cardinal and Miss Malin kept theirs, as will be heard, until the first light of dawn. All their

shadows, thrown away in a circle from the center of the stable lamp, reached up to the rafters under the roof. In the course of the night it often seemed as if it were these long shadows which were really alive, and which kept up the spirit and the talk of the gathering, behind the exhausted people.

"Madame," said the Cardinal to Miss Malin, "I have been told of your salon, in which you make everybody feel at ease and at the same time keen to be at his best. As we want to feel like this tonight, I pray that you will be our hostess, and transfer your talents to this loft."

Miss Malin at once fell in with his suggestion and took command of the place. During the night she performed her rôle, regaling her guests upon the rare luxuries of loneliness, darkness, and danger, while up her sleeve she had death itself, like some lion of the season, some fine Italian tenor, out of the reach of rival hostesses, waiting outside the door to appear and create the sensation of the night. Some people manage to loll upon a throne; Miss Malin, on the contrary, sat in the hay as upon one of those tabourets which are amongst the privileges of duchesses. She made Jonathan cut up the bread and hand it around, and to her companions, who had had no food all day, the hard black crusts held

the fragrance of the cornfields. In the course of the night she and the Cardinal, who were old and faint, drank between them most of the gin in the keg. The two young people did not touch it.

She had, straight away, more than she had asked for in the task of making her companions comfortable, for hardly had the Cardinal spoken when he fell down in a dead faint. The women, who dared not loosen the bandages around his head, sprinkled them with water out of the jar. When he first recovered he stared wildly at them, and put his hands to his head, but as he regained consciousness he gently apologized for the trouble he had given them, adding that he had had a fatiguing day. He seemed, however, somehow changed after his recovery, as if weaker than before, and, as if handing some of his leadership and responsibility to Miss Malin, he kept close to her.

It may be well at this point to give a brief account of Miss Malin Nat-og-Dag:

It has been said that she was a little off her bead. Still, to the people who knew her well, it sometimes seemed open to doubt whether she was not mad by her own choice, or from some caprice of hers, for she was a capricious woman. Neither had she always been mad. She had even

been a woman of great sense, who studied philosophy, and held human passions in scorn. If Miss Malin had now been given the choice of returning to her former reasonable state, and had been capable of realizing the meaning of the offer, she might have declined it on the ground that you have in reality more fun out of life when a little off your head.

Miss Malin was now a rich woman, but she had not always been that, either. She had grown up an orphan girl in the house of rich relations. Her proud old name she had always had, also her very proud big nose.

She had been brought up by a pious governess, of the sect of the Hernhuten, who thought much of female virtue. In those days a woman's being had one center of gravity, and life was simpler to her on this account than it has been later on. She might poison her relations and cheat at cards with a high hand, and yet be an *honnête femme* as long as she tolerated no heresy in the sphere of her specialty. Ladies of her day might themselves fix the price of their hearts and minds and of their souls, should they choose to deal with the devil; but as to their bodies, those were the women's stock in trade, and the lowering of the sacred standard price for them was thought of as disloyal competition to the

guild of the *honnêtes femmes*, and was a deadly sin. Indeed, the higher a young woman could drive up the price individually, the greater was her state of holiness, and it was far better that it should be said of her that for her sake many men had been made unhappy, than that she should have made many men happy.

Miss Malin, urged on by her disposition as well as her education, ran amuck a little in her relation to the doctrine. She took the line, not only of defense, but of a most audacious offensive. Fantastical by nature, she saw no reason for temperance, and drove up her price fantastically high. In fact, in regard to the high valuation of her own body she became the victim of a kind of megalomania. Sigrid the Haughty, the ancient Queen of Norway, summoned to her all her suitors amongst the minor kings of the country, and then put fire to the house and burned them all up, declaring that in this way she would teach the petty kings of Norway to come and woo her. Malin might have done the same with an equally good conscience. She had taken to heart what her governess had read her out of the Bible, that "whoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart," and she had made herself the female counterpart of the

conscientious young male of the Gospel. A man's desire for her was to her, as probably to Queen Sigrid, a deadly impertinence, and as grave an offense as an attempted rape. She showed but little feminine *esprit de corps*, and appeared not to consider in the least that it would have been hard on the honest young women in general if the principle had been carried through, since their whole field of action lay between the two ideas, and, by amalgamating them, you would put as quick an end to their activity as you would to that of a concertina player by folding up the concertina and hooking its two end pieces together. She cut a slightly pathetic figure, as do all people who, in this world, take the words of Scripture *au pied de la lettre*. But she did not at all mind what sort of figure she cut.

In her youth, however, this fanatical virgin cut no mean figure in society, for she was highly talented and brilliant. Though not beautiful, she had the higher gift of seeming so, and in society she played the part of a belle when far lovelier women were left unattended. The homage that she received she took as the natural tribute to a Nat-og-Dag, and she was not insensitive to flatteries which concerned her spirit and courage, or her rare gifts for music and dancing. She even chose

her friends mostly amongst men, and thought women a little stupid. But she was at the same time ever on the outlook, like a fighting bull for a red cloth, or a crusader for the sign of the half-moon, for any sign of the eye of lust, in order to annihilate the owner without pity.

Yet Miss Malin had not escaped the common fate of human beings. She had her romance. When she was twenty-seven, already an old maid, she decided to marry after all. In this position she felt like a very tall bitch surrounded by small yapping lap dogs. She was still prepared to burn up the petty kings who might come to woo her, but she picked out her choice. So did Queen Sigrid, who swooped down on the Christian hero, Olav Trygvesson, and in the saga can be read the tragic outcome of the meeting of these two proud hearts.

Malin, for her part, picked out Prince Ernest Theodore of Anhalt. This young man was the idol of his time. Of the highest birth and enormously rich, since his mother had been a grand duchess of Russia, he was also handsome as an angel, a *bel-esprit*, and a lion of Judah as a soldier. He had even a noble heart, and no frivolity in his nature, so that when, to the right and left of him, fair women died from love of him, he grieved. With all this he

was an observer; he saw things. One day he saw Miss Malin, and for some time saw little else.

This young man had obtained everything in life—and women in particular—too cheaply. Beauty, talents, charm, virtue had been his for the lifting of his little finger. About Miss Malin there was nothing striking but the price. That this thin, big-nosed, penniless girl, two years older than he, would demand not only his princely name and a full share in his brilliant future, but also his prostrate adoration, his life-long fidelity, and subjection in life and death and could be had for nothing less—this impressed the young Prince.

Some people have an unconquerable love of riddles. They may have the chance of listening to plain sense, or to such wisdom as explains life; but no, they must go and work their brains over a riddle, just because they do not understand what it means. That the solution is most likely silly in itself makes no difference to those possessed by this particular passion. Prince Ernest had this mentality, and, even from his childhood, would sit for days lost in riddles and puzzles—a pastime which, in his case, was taken as a proof of high intellectuality. When, therefore, he found this hard nut to crack, the more easily solved beauties faded before his



eyes.

So nervous was Prince Ernest about this first risk of refusal which he had taken in his life—and God knows whether he most dreaded or coveted it—that he did not propose to Malin Natog-Dag until the very last evening before he was to depart for the war. A fortnight later he was killed upon the battle field of Jena, and he was clasping in his hand a small gold locket with a curl of fair hair in it. Many lovely blondes found comfort in the thought of this locket. None knew that amongst all the riches of silken tresses that had weighed him down, only this lock from an old maid's head had been to him a wing feather of a Valkyrie, lifting him from the ground.

If Malin had been a Roman Catholic she would have gone into a nunnery after the battle of Jena, to save, if not her soul, at least her self-respect, for, say what you will, no maiden makes such a brilliant match as she who becomes the bride of the Lord. But being a good Protestant, with a leaning toward the teachings of the *Hernhuten*, she just took up her cross and carried it gallantly. That nobody in the world knew of her tragedy fell in well with her opinion of other people, namely, that they never did know anything of any importance. She gave up all thought of marriage.

At the age of fifty she came unexpectedly into a very great fortune. There were people who understood her so little as to believe that it was this that went to her head and caused there the confounding of fact and fantasy. It was not so. She would not have been in the least upset by finding herself in possession of the treasures of the Grand Turk. What changed her was what changes all women at fifty: the transfer from the active service of life—with a pension or the honors of war, as the case may be—to the mere passive state of a looker-on. A weight fell away from her; she flew up to a higher perch and cackled a little. Her fortune helped her only in so far as it provided the puff of air under her wings that enabled her to fly a little higher and cackle a little louder, although it also did away with all criticism from her surroundings. In her laughter of liberation there certainly was a little madness.

This madness took, as already said, the curious form of a firm faith in a past of colossal licentiousness. She believed herself to have been the grand courtesan of her time, if not the great whore of the Revelation. She took her fortune, her house, and her jewels as the wages of sin, collected in her long career of falls, and because of this she was extremely generous with

her money, considering that what had been frivolously gathered must be frivolously spent. She could not open her mouth without referring to her days of debauchery. Even Prince Ernest Theodore, the chaste young lover whom she had refused even a parting kiss, figured in her waxwork collection as a victim of her siren's arts and ferocity.

It is doubtful whether any spectacle can be enjoyed in the same way by those people who may, after all, run a risk of becoming part of it and by those who are by circumstance entirely cut off from any such possibility. The Emperor of Rome himself might, after a particularly exciting show, see the trident and the net in a nightmare. But the Vestal Virgins would lie on their marble couches and, with the knowledge of connoisseurs, go over every detail in the fight, and imagine themselves in the place of their favorite gladiator. In the same way it is unlikely that even the most pious old lady would attend the trial and burning of a witch with quite the untroubled mind of the male audience around the stake.

No young woman could, even from a nun's cell, have thrown herself into the imaginary excesses of Miss Malin without fear and trembling. But the old woman, who had seen to her safety, could dive

down into any abyss of corruption with the grace of a crested grebe. Faithful by nature, she stuck to the point of view of her youth with regard to the Gospel's words concerning adultery. She had the word of the Bible for it that a multitude of young men had indeed committed it with her. But she resolutely turned them inside out, as a woman will a frock the colors of which have disappointed her by fading. She was the catoptric image of the great repenting sinner whose sins are made white as wool, and was here taking a genuine pleasure in dyeing the pretty lamb's wool of her life in sundry fierce dyes. Jealousy, deceit, seduction, rape, infanticide, and senile cruelty, with all the perversities of the human world of passion, even to the *maladies galantes*, of which she exhibited a surprising knowledge, were to her little sweetmeats which she would pick, one by one, out of the *bonbonnière* of her mind, and crunch with true *gourmandise*. In all her fantasies she was her own heroine, and she ran through the spheres of the seven deadly sins with the ecstasy of a little boy who gallops through the great races of the world upon his rocking-horse. No danger could possibly put fear into her, nor any anguish of conscience spoil her peace. If there was one person of whom she

spoke with contempt it was the Mary Magdalene of the Gospel, who could no better carry the burden of her sweet sins than to retire to the desert of Libya in the company of a skull. She herself carried the weight of hers with the skill of an athlete, and was up to playing a graceful game of bilboquet with it.

Her face itself changed under her great spiritual revolution, and at the time when other women resort to rouge and belladonna, her lenience with human weakness produced in her a heightened color and sweet brilliancy of eye. She was nearer to being a pretty woman than she had ever been before. Like a witch she had always looked, but in her second childhood her appearance had more of the wicked fairy of the children's tales than of the Medusa, the revenging angel with her flaming sword who had held her own against Prince Ernest. She had preserved her elfin leanness and lightness, and as for her skill as a dancer, she might still be the belle of any great ball. The little cloven hoof beneath was now daintily gilded, like that of Esmeralda's goat itself. It was in this glow of mild madness and second youth that she now sat, marooned in the hayloft of the peasant's barn, conversing vivaciously with the Cardinal Hamilcar.

"When, as a boy,

I stayed for some time at Coblenz, at the court of the emigrant Duke of Chartres," the Cardinal said, after a little pause, pensively, "I knew the great painter Abildgaard, and used to spend my mornings in his studio. When the ladies of the court came to him to have their portraits painted—for he was much sought by such fair women who wanted their beauty immortalized—how many times have I not heard him tell them: 'Wash your faces, Mesdames. Take the powder, rouge, and kohl off them. For if you will paint your faces yourselves I cannot paint you.' Often, in the course of my life, have I thought of his words. It has seemed to me that this is what the Lord is continually telling the too weak and vain mortals: 'Wash your faces. For if you will do the painting of them yourselves, laying on humility and renunciation, charity and chastity one inch thick, I can do nothing about them.' Tonight, indeed," the old man went on, smiling, as a deep movement of the sea seemed to shake the building, "the Lord is doing the washing for us with his own hands, and he is using a great deal of water for it. But we will seek comfort in the thought that there is no higher honor or happiness for us than this: to have our portraits painted by the hand of the Lord. That alone is what we have

ever longed for and named immortality.”

Seeing that the face of the speaker was covered with bloodstained bandages, Miss Malin was about to make a remark, but she restrained herself, for she did not know what lasting disfigurements of a noble presence they might conceal. The Cardinal understood her thought and expressed it with a smile. “Yes, Madame,” he said, “my face the Lord has seen fit to wash in a more ardent spirit. But have we not been taught of the cleansing power of blood? Madame, I know now that it is stronger even than we thought. And perhaps my face needed it. Who, but the Lord, knows what rouge and powder I have put on it in the course of seventy years? Verily, Madame, in these bandages I feel that I am nearer to posing for my portrait by him than I ever have been before.”

Miss Malin blushed slightly at being detected in a lack of tact, and nimbly put back the conversation a little, as one sets back a clock. “I am thankful,” she said, “that I have in my life had neither rouge nor powder on my face, and Monsieur Abildgaard might have painted it at any moment. But as to this divine portrait of me, which is, I suppose, to be hung in the galleries of heaven, when I myself am dead and gone—allow me to say, My Lord, that here my ideas differ from yours a little.

"The ideas of art critics," said the Cardinal, "are likely to differ; that much I learned in the studio. I have seen the master himself strike the face of a great French painter with a badger's-hair brush full of cadmium, because they disagreed about the laws of perspective. Impart to me your views, Madame. I may learn from you."

"Well, then," said Miss Malin, "where in all the world did you get the idea that the Lord wants the truth from us? It is a strange, a most original, idea of yours, My Lord. Why, he knows it already, and may even have found it a little bit dull. Truth is for tailors and shoemakers, My Lord. I, on the contrary, have always held that the Lord has a penchant for masquerades. Do you not yourself tell us, my lords spiritual, that our trials are really blessings in disguise? And so they are. I, too, have found them to be so, at midnight, at the hour when the mask falls. But at the same time nobody can deny that they have been dressed up by the hand of an unrivaled expert. The Lord himself—with your permission—seems to me to have been masquerading pretty freely at the time when he took on flesh and dwelt amongst us. Indeed, had I been the hostess of the wedding of Cana, I might have resented the feat a little—I might, I tell you, My Lord—had I there asked



that brilliant youth, the carpenter's son, in order to give him a treat on my best Berncastler Doktor, and he had, at the moment when it suited him, changed pure water into a far finer vintage! And still the lady did not know, of course, of what things he was really capable, being God Almighty.

"Indeed, My Lord," she went on, "of all monarchs of whom I have ever heard, the one who came, to my mind, nearest to the true spirit of God was the Caliph Haroun of Bagdad, who, as you know, had a taste for disguise. Ah, ah! had I lived in his day I should have played the game with him to his own taste, should I have had to pick up five hundred beggars before knocking against the Commander of the Faithful under the beggar's robe. And when I have, in my life, come nearest to playing the rôle of a goddess, the very last thing which I have wanted from my worshipers has been the truth. 'Make poetry,' I have said to them, 'use your imagination, disguise the truth to me. Your truth comes out quite early enough'—under your favor, My Lord—'and that is the end of the game.'

"And now, what, My Lord," said the old lady, "do you think of womanly modesty? Surely, that is a divine quality; and what is it but deceit on principle? Since here a youth and a

maiden are present, you and I, who have observed life from the best of observatories—you from the confessional, and I from the alcove—will take pains to disregard the truth; we will talk only of legs. I can tell you, then, that you may divide all women according to the beauty of their legs. Those who have pretty legs, and who know the concealed truth to be sweeter than all illusions, are the truly gallant women, who look you in the face, who have the genuine courage of a good conscience. But if they took to wearing trousers, where would their gallantry be? The young men of our days, who wear tight trousers which oblige them to keep two valets for drawing them on, one for each leg —”

“And a difficult job even at that,” said the Cardinal thoughtfully.

“To walk about as true missionaries of the truth, Miss Malin resumed, “may be more human, but surely they have nothing divine. They may have the facts of life on their side, while the legs of the women, under their petticoats, are ideas. But the people who go forth on ideas are the ones who have the true heroism. For it is the consciousness of hidden power which gives courage. But I beg your pardon, My Lord, for speaking so long.”

“Madame,” said the Cardinal gently, “do not apologize. I have

profited by your speech.  
But it has not convinced  
me that you and I are not  
really of one mind. This  
world of ours is like the  
children's game of bread  
and cheese; there is  
always something  
underneath—truth,  
deceit; truth, deceit!  
When the Caliph  
masqueraded as one of  
his own poor subjects, all  
his hidden splendor could  
not have saved the jest  
from being in pretty poor  
taste, had he not had  
beneath it a fraternal  
heart for his poor people.  
Likewise, when our Lord  
did, for some thirty years,  
masquerade as a son of  
man, there would have  
been no really good sense  
in the thing had he not  
had, after all, a humane  
heart, and even, Madame,  
a sympathy with lovers of  
good wine. The witty  
woman, Madame, chooses  
for her carnival costume  
one which ingeniously  
reveals something in her  
spirit or heart which the  
conventions of her  
everyday life conceal; and  
when she puts on the  
hideous long-nosed  
Venetian mask, she tells  
us, not only that she has  
a classic nose behind it,  
but that she has much  
more, and may well be  
adored for things other  
than her mere beauty. So  
speaketh the Arbiter of  
the masquerade: 'By thy  
mask I shall know thee.'

"But let us agree,  
Madame," he went on,  
"that the day of judgment  
shall not be, as insipid  
preachers will have us  
believe, the moment of  
unveiling of our own poor

little attempts at deceit, about which the Lord does indeed already know all, but, on the contrary, that it shall be the hour in which the Almighty God himself lets fall the mask. And what a moment! Oh, Madame, it will not be too much to have waited for it a million years. Heaven will ring and resound with laughter, pure and innocent as that of a child, clear as that of a bride, triumphant as that of a faithful warrior who lays down the enemy's banners at his sovereign's feet, or who is at last lifted from the dungeon and the chains, cleared of his slanderer's calumnies!

"Still, Madame, has not the Lord arranged for us here a day of judgment in miniature? It will be soon midnight. Let it be the hour of the falling of the mask. If it be not your mask, or mine, which is to fall, let it be the mask of fate and life. Death we may soon have to face, without any mask. In the meantime we have nothing to do but to remember what life be really like. Come, Madame, and my young brother and sister! As we shall not be able to sleep, and are still comfortably seated here, tell me who you are, and recount to me your stories without restraint.

"You," the old man said, addressing himself to Jonathan Mærsk, "rose up in the boat, with danger of capsizing it, at the sight of the falling granary. Thus, I believe, some

proud building of your life has fallen, and has gone to pieces under your eyes. Tell us which it was.

"Also, I noticed a short time ago," he went on, "when I spoke of the purity of our blood, that you shrank from my words as from the sight of the granary. You are, perhaps, a partisan of the revolutionary ideas of your generation. Do not imagine, then, that I am a stranger to those theories. I am indeed more closely in touch with them than you could know. But should we let any discrepancy in politics separate our hearts at this hour? Come, I shall speak to you in your own words: And now abideth liberty, equality, fraternity, these three, but the greatest of these is fraternity.

"Or," he said, "you may be, my dear son, groaning under the sad burden of the bastard. But who more than the bastard needs to cry out to ask who he is? So have faith in us. Tell us now, before morning, the story of your life."

The young man, whose countenance had all the time been stamped with the loneliness which is the hallmark of true melancholy, at these words looked up into the Cardinal's face. The great dignity of manner of the old man had impressed the others from the moment they came into his presence. Now the boy was fascinated by the strange lucidity of his eyes. For a few moments

the two looked intensely at each other. The color rose in the pale cheeks of the young man. He drew a deep sigh.

"Yes," he said, as if inspired, "I will tell you my story. Perhaps I shall understand it all better when I can, at last, give words to it."

"Wash your face, my young friend," said Miss Malin, "and your portrait, within our hearts, will impart to you immortality."

"I will call my tale," said the young man, "The Story of Timon of Assens."

"If you had happened to live in Copenhagen," the young man began, "you would have heard of me, for there I was, at a time, much talked about. They even gave me a name. They called me Timon of Assens. And they were right in so far as I do indeed come from Assens, which is, as you may know, a small seaport town on the island of Funen. There I was born, the son of very respectable people, the skipper Clement Mærsk and his wife, Magdalena, who owned a pretty house with a garden in the town.

"I do not know whether you will think it curious that all the time I lived at Assens it never occurred to me that anything could or would harm me. I never, indeed, thought that anything at all might occupy itself with me. It seemed to me that it was, on the

contrary, my task to look after the world. My father sailed, and for many summers I sailed with him, and came to Portugal and Greece. When we were on the sea, the ship and the cargo had to be looked after by us, and to both of us they seemed the important things in the world.

“My mother was a lovely woman. Although I have for some time moved in the highest society, I never have seen her equal either in looks or in manners. But she kept no company with the other skippers’ wives, and never went to other people’s houses. Her father had been assistant to the great Swedish botanist, Linné, and to her the flowers, and what happened to them, and the bees, and their hives and works, seemed more important than anything which had to do with human beings. While I was with her I held the belief that the plants, flowers, and insects of the world were the really important things in it, and that human beings were here only to look after them.

“In the garden at Assens my mother and I lived in what I think is called an idyll. Our days were filled with nothing but innocence and pleasure.”

Miss Malin, who had been listening attentively, always keen for any kind of narrative, here interrupted the narrator, sighing a little.

"Ah" she said, "I know about idylls. *Mais moi je n'aime pas les plaisirs innocents.*"

"I had a friend in Assens, or so I thought," Jonathan went on, "a clever boy by the name of Rasmus Petersen, a couple of years older than I, and taller by a head. He was to have been a parson, but he got into some trouble and never succeeded, but when he was a student in Copenhagen he was a tutor in many great houses. He always took a great interest in me, but though I admired him I never felt quite well in his company. He was very sharp, like a razor; you did not come away from him without having cut your fingers a little, although at the moment you might not feel it. When I was about sixteen he told my father that I ought to come with him to Copenhagen, to study under the learned people that he knew there, for he thought me a very brilliant boy."

"And were you very brilliant?" asked Miss Malin with surprise.

"Alas, no, Madame," said Jonathan.

"When I first came to Copenhagen," Jonathan went on, "I was very lonely, because there was nothing for me to do. It seemed to me that there was nothing but people there. They did not care for me, either. When I had talked to them for a little they generally walked away. But after a while my



interest was caught by the expansive hothouses and nurseries of the royal palaces and of the great noblemen. Amongst these the most renowned were those of Baron Joachim von Gersdorff, who was High Steward of Denmark, and himself a great botanist, who had traveled all over Europe, India, Africa, and America and collected rare plants everywhere.

“Have you heard of this man before, or do you know him? He came of a Russian family, and his wealth was such as is otherwise unknown in Denmark. He was a poet and musician, a diplomat, a seducer of women, even then, when he was an old man. Still, all this was not what caught your mind about the man. But it was this: that he was a man of fashion. Or you might say that fashion itself was only, in Copenhagen at least, the footman of Baron Gersdorff. Whatever he did at once became the thing for everybody to do. Oh, I do not want to describe the man. You will know, I think, what a man of fashion means. I have learned it. Such a man was he.

“I had not been to his hothouses, to which Rasmus obtained admission for me, more than a few times when I met Baron Gersdorff himself there one afternoon. Rasmus presented me to him, and he greeted me in a very friendly way, and offered to show me the whole

place, which he did with much patience and benevolence. After that day I nearly always found him there. He took me on to write a catalogue for his cactus house. We spent many days together in that hot glasshouse. I liked him much, because he had seen so much of the world, and could tell me about the flowers and insects of it. At times I noticed that my presence moved him strangely. One afternoon, as I was reading to him a treatise upon the mouth of the tube of the Epiphyllum, I saw that he had shut his eyes. He took my hand and held it, and as I finished he looked up and said: 'What am I to give you, Jonathan, as a finder's fee?' I laughed and answered that I did not think that I had found out anything exceptional yet. 'Oh, God,' he said, 'a finder's fee for the summer of 1814!' Shortly after that day he began to talk to me of my voice. He told me that I had a remarkably sweet voice, and asked me to let him arrange for Monsieur Dupuy to give me singing lessons."

"And did you have a lovely voice?" asked Miss Malin with some incredulity, for the voice of the narrator was low and hoarse.

"Yes, Madame," he said, "at that time I had a very pretty voice. I had been taught to sing by my mother."

"Ah," said Miss Malin, "there is nothing in the world more lovely

than a lovely boy's voice. When I was in Rome there was a boy named Mario in the choir of the Jesu, who had a voice like an angel. The Pope himself told me to go and hear him, and I was well aware why, for he was hoping to convert me to Rome, and thought that this golden angel's song might break down all my resistance. From my pew I saw the Pope himself burst into tears when, like a swan taking the wing, this Mario lifted up his voice in Carissimi's immortal recitative: 'Get thee behind me, Satan!' Oh, that good Pius VIII. Two days later he was wickedly poisoned by three cantharide pills. I do not hold with popery, but I admit that he was a fine figure of a Pope, and died like a man. And so you had your lessons, and became a virtuoso, Monsieur Jonathan?"

"Yes, Madame," said Jonathan with a smile, "my lessons I had. And as I was always very fond of music I worked hard and made good progress. At the beginning of the third winter the Baron, who by this time never seemed to like to part with me, took me around to the great houses of his friends and made me sing for them. When I had first come to Copenhagen I used to stand outside the great houses on winter evenings, to see the flowers and chandeliers in the halls, and the young women as they got out of their carriages. Now I

went in everywhere myself, and the ladies, old and young, were as kind to me as if I had been their child or young brother. I sang at Court, before King Frederick and Queen Marie, and the Queen smiled very kindly at me. I was very happy. I thought: How foolish those people are who tell you that the great people of the towns love nothing but riches and worldly honors. All these ladies and great gentlemen love music as much as I do—yes, more—and forget everything else for it, and what a great thing is the love of the beautiful.”

“Did you fall in love?” Miss Malin asked.

“In a way I was in love with all of them,” said Jonathan. “They had tears in their eyes when I sang; they accompanied me on the harp, or joined me in duets; they took flowers from their hair and gave them to me. But perhaps I was in love with the Countess Atalanta Danneskjold, who was the youngest of the sisters Danneskjold, whom they called the nine swans of Samsø. Her mother made us pose together in a charade, as Orpheus and Euridice. All that winter was very much like a dream, for do you not sometimes dream that you can sing whatever note you like, and run up and down the whole scale, like the angels on Jacob’s ladder? I sometimes dream that even now.

“But toward spring there befell me

what I took to be a great misfortune, not knowing then what misfortune means. I fell ill, and as I was getting well the court physician, who was attending me, told me that I had lost my voice and that I had no hope of getting it back. While I was still in bed I was much worried by this, not only by the loss of my voice itself, but by the thought of how I should now disappoint and lose my friends, and how sad my life would now become. I was even shedding tears about it when Rasmus Petersen came to see me. I opened my heart to him, to get his sympathy in my distress. He had to get up from his chair and pretend to look out of the window to hide his laughter. I thought it heartless of him, and did not say any more to him. 'Why, Jonathan,' he said, 'I have reason to laugh, for I have won my bet. I held that you were indeed the simpleton you look, which nobody else would believe. They think that you are a shrewd boy. It will not make the slightest difference in the world to you that you have lost that voice of yours.' I did not understand him. I think I grew pale, even though his words cheered me.

" 'Come,' he said, 'the Baron Gersdorff is your father. I guessed as much, before I ever brought you to his hothouses, from looking at a portrait of him as a child, in which he also has

the head of an angel. When he knew it himself he was more pleased than I have ever seen him. He said: "I have never had a child in my life. It seems very curious to me that I should have got one. Still, I believe this boy to be indeed the son of my body, and I shall reward him for that. But should I find that my soul is going to live on, in him—as God liveth I will legitimize him, and leave him all that I own. If it be not possible to have him made a Baron Gersdorff, I will at least have him a Knight of Malta under the name of De Resurrection."

" 'It is on this account,' Rasmus said, 'that the fine people of Copenhagen have all been spoiling you, Jonathan. They have been watching you all the time to see if the soul of Baron Gersdorff was showing itself in you, in which case you would be the richest man, and the best match, Jonathan, in all northern Europe.' Then he proceeded to recount to me a conversation that he had had with Baron Gersdorff about me:

" 'You know me, my good Rasmus, to be a poet,' the Baron had said to him. 'Well, I will tell you what sort of poet I am. I have never in my life written a line without imagining myself in the place of some poet or other that I know of. I have written poems in the manner of Horace or Lamartine. Likewise I am not capable of writing a love letter to a woman

without representing to myself in my own mind either Lovelace, the Corsaire or Eugene Onegine. The ladies have been flattered, adored, and seduced by all the heroes of Chateaubriand and Lord Byron in turn. There is nothing that I have ever done unconsciously, without knowing well what I did. But this boy, this Jonathan, I have really made without thinking of it. He is bound to be, not any figure out of Firdousi, or even Oehlenschlaeger, but a true and genuine work of Joachim Gersdorff. That is a curious thing, a very curious thing, for Joachim Gersdorff to be watching. That is a phenomenon of extreme importance to Joachim Gersdorff. Let him but show me what a Joachim Gersdorff is in reality, and no reward of mine shall be too great. Riches, houses, jewels, women, wines, and the honors of the land shall be his for it.'

"All this I heard as I was lying in my bed.

"I do not know if you will think it strange, My Lord, or you, Miss Nat-og-Dag, that the strongest emotion which these words aroused in me was a feeling of deep shame. Such a strong feeling I had never, in all my life, experienced.

"If the Baron had seduced me, as I believe that he did seduce other pretty boys, I should have had to blush before the faces of honest people. But I might have found

refuge from that shame in my own heart, for in a way I loved the man. For the shame which I now felt it seemed to me that there was no refuge anywhere. Upon the very bottom of my soul, I felt, and that for the first time in my life, the eyes of all the world.

“God made the world, My Lord, and looked at it, and saw that it was good. Yes. But what if the world had looked back at him, to see whether he was good or not? This was, I thought, what Lucifer had really done to God: he had looked at him, and had made the Lord feel that he himself was being judged by a critic. Was he good? I—I had been innocent as God. Now I was made a true Joachim Gersdorff. I had in all my veins the blood of this man, of a man of fashion, the sort of man who attracts the eyes of all the world. God could not stand it. He hurled down Lucifer, as you remember, into the abyss. God was right; he should not have stood it. I could not stand it either, but I had to.

“To find out whether Rasmus was right I did, I think, a brave, even a heroic, thing, which proves to my mind that I had been well brought up, after all, by the skipper and his wife. I went to a big party at the house of Countess Danneskjold, and sang to them again. I sang my old songs, and I heard my own voice, or what was left of it. You will



understand, who are listening to me now, how poor that must have been. I had sung to them before, and done my best, and it seemed to me that I had then given them the very best which I had in me. As I now sang there was not one of the faces around me which showed the slightest disappointment or regret. All the people were kind and complimentary to me, as they had always been. I felt then that I had never given them anything, had never done anything to them at all. It was the world around me which was watching me, and meant to do something to me. All eyes were on me, for I was a genuine Joachim Gersdorff, a young man of fashion. I came away from that house at midnight, and that was the hour, My Lord, of which the fall of the granary reminded me.

“The same night I wrote a letter to the Baron, to take leave of him. I was so filled with abhorrence of him and all his world that, on reading my letter through, I found the word ‘fashion’ recurring nine times. I gave my letter to Rasmus to hand to him. As he was leaving I remembered that I had said nothing of the fortune which the Baron meant to leave to me. I now charged my friend to communicate to him my refusal of any of it.

“I could not stand the sight of the streets. Leaving my pretty rooms

in the neighborhood of the Gersdorff Palace, I went in a boat across the harbor to the small fortified island of Trekroner, and took lodgings with the quartermaster, where I could see nothing but the sea. Rasmus walked down with me, and carried my bag. All the time he was trying to hold me back. We had to pass the door of the Gersdorff Palace, and such a sudden loathing of the whole place filled me at the sight of it that I spat at it, as my father—alas, as the skipper Clement Mærsk of Assens—had taught me to spit when I was a boy.

“For a few days I lived at Trekroner, trying to find again there the world as it had once been mine—not myself, for I wanted nothing less than myself. I thought of the garden of Assens, but it was closed to me forever. Once you have eaten of the tree of knowledge, and have seen yourself, gardens close themselves to you. You become a person of fashion, even as did Adam and Eve when they began to occupy themselves with their appearance.

“But only a few days later Rasmus came over to see me. He had taken a small yawl to get to me, he who was so terrified of the sea.

“‘Ah, my friend,’ he said, rubbing his hands, ‘you were born under a lucky star. I gave your letter to the Baron, and as he read it he became to the highest

degree excited and delighted. He got up and walked to and fro, and exclaimed: "God, this misanthropy, this melancholy! How I know them. They are my own altogether! For the first week after I had become the lover of the Empress Catherine I felt all that he feels now. I meant to enter a monastery. It is young Joachim Gersdorff to a turn, but done all in black, an etching from the colored original. But good God, what power the boy has got in him, what a fine deep black! I had not thought it of him with his high voice. This is the winter night of Russia, the wolves upon the steppes." After he had read your letter a second time he said: "He will not be a man of fashion? But so we all are, we Gersdorffs; so was my father at the court of the young Empress. Why should not my son be the same? Surely he shall be our heir, the glass of fashion, and the mold of form."

" 'I tell you, Jonathan,' said Rasmus, 'that your melancholy is the highest fashion of the day. The elegant young men of Copenhagen wear black and speak with bitterness of the world, and the ladies talk of the grave.'

"And this was the time when they took to calling me Timon of Assens.

" 'Did you tell him,' I asked Rasmus, 'that I will on no account have any of his money?' And Rasmus answered,

'Yes, I did; and he was so pleased that I thought that he might have a stroke and leave you his heir there and then. "Good," he said, "good, my son Timon. Let me see you throw it away. Scatter it well. Show the world your contempt of it in the true Gersdorff way Let the hetæra have it; there is no better advertisement for a melancholy man of fashion. They will follow you everywhere and make a charming contrast to your deep black. How I love that boy," he said. "I have," he added, "a collection of emeralds, unmatched in all Europe. I will send him that to start with." And here, indeed, it is,' said Rasmus, handing me, with great care, a case of jewels.

" 'But when the Baron heard,' Rasmus said, 'Of your spitting at the door of his house, he became very grave. "That," he said, "I did to my father's door, to the door of the Gersdorff Palace of St. Petersburg." He at once sent for his lawyer, and drew up a document to acknowledge you as his son, and to leave you all his fortune. Likewise he has written to obtain for you the title of Knight of Malta, and the name of De Résurrection.'

"By this time I was so depressed that I thought of death with a true longing and nostalgia. I returned with Rasmus to town, to pay my debts, so that my tailor and my hatter

should not talk of me when I was dead, and I walked out upon the bridge of Langebro, looking at the water and the boats lying there, some of which came from Assens. I waited until there were not so many people about. It was one of the blue April evenings of Copenhagen. A barcarole by Salvadore that I had used to sing ran into my mind. It gave me much ease, together with the thought that I would soon disappear. As I was standing there a carriage, driving by, slackened its pace, and a little later a lady dressed in black lace came up, looked around, and spoke to me in a low voice, quite out of breath. 'You are Jonathan Mærsk?' she asked me, and as I said yes, she came up close to me. 'Oh, Jonathan Mærsk,' she said, 'I know you. I have followed you. I see what you are about. Let me die with you. I have long meant to seek death, but I dare not go alone. Let me go in your company. I am as great a sinner as Judas,' she said, 'like him I have betrayed, betrayed. Come, let us go.' In the spring twilight she seized my hand and held it. I had to shake her off and run away.

"I thought: There are probably always in Copenhagen four or five women who are on the verge of suicide; perhaps there are more. If I have become the man of fashion amongst them, how shall I escape them, to die in peace? Must I

die, now, in fashionable company, and give the tone of fashion to the bridge of Langebro? Must I go down to the bottom of the sea in the society of women who do not know a major from a minor key, and is my last moan to be—”

“*Le dernier cri*” said Miss Malin, with a truly witchlike little laugh.

“I went back to Trekroner,” said Jonathan after a short pause, “and sat in my room. I could neither eat nor drink.

“At this moment I unexpectedly received a visit from skipper Clement Mærsk of Assens. He had been away to Trankebar, and had just returned, and had looked me up.

“‘What is this,’ he said, ‘that I hear of you, Jonathanner! Are they to make you a Knight of Malta? I know Malta well. As you go into the entrance and have got the Castle of San Angelo on your right hand, you have to be careful about a rock to port.’

“‘Father,’ I said, remembering again how we had sailed together, ‘is Baron Gersdorff my father? Do you know that man?’

“‘Leave the women’s business alone,’ he said. ‘Here you are, Jonathan, a seaworthy ship, whoever built you.’

“I told him then all that had happened to me.

“‘Little Jonathan,’ he said, ‘you have fallen amongst women.’ I said that I really did not know many women. ‘That does

not signify,' he said, 'I have seen the men of Copenhagen. Those people who want things to happen are all of them women, masquerading in a new model of wax noses. I tell you, in regard to ships, if it were not for the women sitting in ports waiting for silks, tea, cochineal, and pepper—all things which they want for making things happen—the ships would sail on quietly, content to be on the sea and never thinking of land. Your mother,' he went on after a little while, 'was the only woman I ever knew who did not want things to happen.' I said, 'But even she, Father, did not succeed in it, and God help me now.'

"I told him how Baron Gersdorff had wanted to leave me his fortune. Father had become hard of hearing. Only after a time he said, 'Did you speak of money? Do you want money, Jonathan? It would be curious if you did, for I know where there is a lot of it. Three years ago,' he recounted, 'I was becalmed off a small island near Haiti. I went ashore to see the place, and to dig up some rare plants which I meant to bring your mother, and there I struck upon the buried treasure of Captain l'Olonnais, who was one of the *Filibustiers*. I dug it all up, and as I wanted exercise I dug it all down again, in better order than the Captain had done. I know the exact

place of it. If you want it I will get it for you some time, and if you cannot stop the Baron from giving you his money, you might make him a present of it. It is more than he has got.'

" 'Father!' I cried, 'you do not know what you say. You have not lived in this town. What a gesture that would be. It would make me a man of fashion forever—I should indeed be Timon of Assens. Bring me a parrot from Haiti, Father, but not money.'

" 'I believe you are unhappy, Jonathan,' he said.

" 'I am unhappy, Father,' I said. 'I have loved this town and the people in it. I have drunk them down with delight. But they have some poison in them which I cannot stand. If I think of them now, I vomit up my soul. Do you know of a cure for me?'

" 'Why, yes,' he said, 'I know of a cure for everything: salt water.'

" 'Salt water?' I asked him.

" 'Yes,' he said, 'in one way or the other. Sweat, or tears, or the salt sea.'

"I said: 'I have tried sweat and tears. The salt sea I meant to try, but a woman in black lace prevented me.'

" 'You speak wildly, Jonathan,' he said.

" 'You might come with me,' he said after a little time. 'I am bound for St. Petersburg.'

" 'No,' I said, 'to St. Petersburg I will not



go.'

" 'Well,' he said, 'I am bound for it. But go and get well while I am there, for you are looking very sick. I will take you when I come back, into open sea.'

" 'I cannot stay in Copenhagen,' I said.

" 'Good,' he said, 'go to some place of which the doctors can tell you, and I will pick you up at Hamburg.'

"And in this way, My Lord, and Miss Nat-og-Dag," the young man said, "I was sent here, by skipper Mærsk, whether he be my father or not, to get cured by salt water."

"Ah, ah, ah," said Miss Malin, when the young man had finished his tale, in which she had by this time become quite absorbed. She rubbed her small hands together, as pleased as a child with a new toy. "What a story, Monsieur Timon. What a place this is! What people we are! I myself have by now become aware of my identity: I am Mademoiselle Diogenes, and this little lantern, which the fat old peasant woman left us, that is my famous lamp, by the light of which I have sought a man, and by which I have found him. You are the man, Timon! If I had searched all Europe with lamp and lantern I should not have found more precisely what I wanted."

"What do you want me for, Madame?" Jonathan asked her.

"Oh, not for myself," said Miss Malin. "I am not in a mood for

love-making tonight. In fact, I might have had, for supper, a decoction of the tree agnus castus, of which a specimen is shown in Guinnee. I want you for Calypso.

"You see this girl?" she asked him, looking with pride and tenderness at the fair young creature by her side. "She is not my own daughter, and still, by the Holy Ghost, I am making her, as much as my old friend Baron Gersdorff ever made you. I have carried her in my heart and my mind, and sighed under her weight. Now the days are accomplished when I shall be delivered, and here we have the stable and the manger. But when I have brought her forth, I shall want a nurse; further, I shall want a governess, a tutor, a *maestro* for her, and you are to be all that."

"Alas, to teach her what?" asked Jonathan.

"To teach her to be seen," said Miss Malin. "You complain of people looking at you. But what if you were bent down by the opposite misfortune? What if nobody could or would see you, although you were, yourself, firmly convinced of your own existence? There are more martyrdoms than yours, Misanthrope of Assens. You may have read the tale of the Emperor's new clothes, by that brilliant, rising young author, Hans Andersen. But here we have it the other way around: the

Emperor is walking along in all his splendor, scepter and orb in hand, and no one in the whole town dares to see him, for they believe that they shall then be thought unfit for their offices, or impossibly dull. This is my little Emperor; the procession a bad man made, about whom I shall tell you; and you, Monsieur Timon, you are the innocent child who cries out: 'But there *is* an Emperor!'

"The motto of the Nat-og-Dag family," went on Miss Malin, "runs thus: 'The sour with the sweet.' Out of piety to my ancestors I have partaken of many of the mixed dishes of life: the gibleet soup of Mr. Swedenborg, the salad of platonic love, even the sauerkraut of the divine Marquis. I have developed the palate of a true Nat-og-Dag; I have come to relish them. But the bitterness of life, that is bad nourishment, particularly to a young heart. Upon the meadows of the Westerlands they raise a sort of mutton which, fed on salt grass, produces an excellent-tasting meat known in the culinary world as *pré-salé*. This girl has been fed on such salt plains and on brine and bitter herbs. Her little heart has had nothing else to eat. She is indeed, spiritually, an *agneau pré-salé*, my salted little ewe lamb."

The girl, who had all the time sat crouching near her old friend, drew herself up when Miss Malin began to tell her story. She sat up straight

then, her amber-colored eyes below their delicate, long-drawn eyebrows that were like the markings on a butterfly's wings, or themselves like a pair of low extended wings, were fixed on the air, too haughty to turn toward her audience. In spite of her gentle brow she was a dangerous animal, ready to spring. But at what? At life altogether.

"Have you ever heard," asked Miss Malin, "of Count August Platen-Hallermund?" At the sound of the name the girl shuddered and became pale. A threatening dusk sank over her clear eyes. "Hush," said Miss Malin, "we shall not name him again. As he is not a man, but an angel, we shall call him the Count Seraphina. We shall sit, tonight, in a *lit de justice* on the Count. The truth must be told about him just this one time. When I was a little girl and was taught French," the old lady addressed herself, above the heads of the young people, in a sudden little fit of familiarity, to the Cardinal, "the very first phrase in my reading book ran thus: *Le lit est une bonne chose; si l'on n'y dort pas, l'on s'y repose*. Like much else which we were taught as children, it was proved by life to be a complete fallacy. But it may still apply to the bed of justice."

"Indeed I have read the poetry and philosophy of Count August," said the

Cardinal.

"Not I," said Miss Malin. "When, on doomsday, I am called to account for many hours spent in the wrong places, I shall still be able to plead: 'But I have not read the poems of Count August von Platen.' How many poems has he written, My Lord?"

"Ah, I could not tell," said the Cardinal. Miss Malin said: "*Cinq ou six milles? C'est beaucoup. Combien en a-t-il de bons? Quinze ou seize. C'est beaucoup, dit Martin.*"

"You have read, My Lord," she went on, "of the unhappy young man who had been changed into a pug by a witch, and who could not be transformed back unless a pure virgin, who had known no man, should, upon a St. Sylvester's night, read the poems of Gustav Pfizer without falling asleep? And his sympathetic friend, when he is told all this, answers: 'Then, alas, I cannot help you. First of all, I am no virgin. Secondly, I never could, reading Gustav Pfizer's poems, keep from falling into slumber.' If Count August is turned into a pug, for exactly the same reasons I shall not be able to help him."

"This man, then, this Count Seraphina," she took up the thread of her tale, after her little flutter of thought, "was the uncle of this girl, and she was brought up in his house after the death of her parents. So now, my

good friends, I will lighten the darkness of this night to you, by impressing upon it the deeper darkness of Calypso's story:

"Count Seraphina," said Miss Malin, "meditated much upon celestial matters. And, as you must be aware, who have read his poems, he was convinced that no woman was ever allowed to enter heaven. He disliked and mistrusted everything female; it gave him goose flesh.

"His idea of paradise was, then, a long row of lovely young boys, in transparent robes of white, walking two by two, singing his poems to his music, in such lovely trebles as you yourself once possessed, Mr. Jonathan, or otherwise discussing his philosophy, or absorbed in his books upon arithmetics. The estate which he owned at Angelshorn in Mechlenburg he endeavored to turn into such a heaven, a Von Platen waxwork elysium, and in the very center of it he had, most awkwardly for himself and for her, this little girl, about whom he had doubts as to whether or not she might pass as an angel.

"As long as she was a child he took pleasure in her company, for he had an eye for beauty and grace. He had her dressed up in boy's clothes, all of velvet and lace, and he allowed her hair to grow into such

hyacinthine locks as young Ganymede wore at the court of Jove. He was much occupied by the thought of showing himself to the world as a conjurer, a high white Magian, capable of transforming that drop of blood of the devil himself, a girl, into that sweet object nearest to the angels, which was a boy. Or perhaps he even dreamed of creating a being of its own kind, an object of art which was neither boy nor girl, but a pure Von Platen. There may have been times, then, when his delicate artist's blood stirred a little in his veins at the idea. He taught the little girl Greek and Latin. He tried to convey to her the idea of the beauty of higher mathematics. But when he lectured to her upon the infinite loveliness of the circle, she asked him: if it were really so fair, what color was it—was it not blue? Ah, no, he said, it had no color at all. From that moment he began to fear that she would not become a boy.

“He kept looking at her, with terrible doubts, more and more virtuously indignant at the signs of his mistake. And when he found that there was no longer any doubt, but that his failure was a certainty, with a shiver he turned his eyes away from her forever, and annihilated her. Her girl's beauty was her sentence of death. This happened two or three years ago. Since then she has not

existed. Mr. Timon, you are free to envy her.

“The Count Seraphina had a great predilection for the Middle Ages. His huge castle of Angelshorn dated from that time, and he had taken pains to bring it back inside, as outside, to the times of the Crusades. It was not constructed, no more than was the Count himself, to spread itself much on earth, but the tall towers aspired to heaven, with a flight of jackdaws like a thin smoke around their heads, and the deep vaults seemed to dig themselves down toward the pit. The daylight was let in, between fathom-thick walls, through old stained glass, like cinnamon and blood of oxen, along the sides of the rooms, where, upon faded tapestries, unicorns were killed and the Magians and their retinue carried gold and myrrh to Bethlehem. Here the Count listened to, and himself played, the *viol de gamba* and the *viol d’amore*, and practiced archery. He never read a printed book, but had his authors of the day copied by hand in ultramarine and scarlet letters.

“He liked to imagine himself the abbot of a highly exclusive monastery, whereto only fair young monks of brilliant talent and soft manners were admitted. He and his circle of young friends sat down to dinner in old sculptured oak pews, and wore cowls of



purple silk. His house was an abbey upon the northern soil, a Mount Athos to which no hen or cow is allowed to come, not even the wild bees, on account of their queen bee. Aye, the Count was more zealous than the monks of Athos, for when he and his seraglio of lovely youths sometimes drank wine out of a skull, to keep present the thought of death and eternity, he took care that it should not be the skull of a lady. Oh, that the name of that man must dishonor my lips! It were better for a man that he should kill a lady, in order to procure her skull to drink his wine from, than that he should excite himself by drinking it, so to say, out of his own skull.

“In this dark castle the annihilated girl would walk about. She was the loveliest thing in the place, and would have adorned the court of Queen Venus, who would very likely have made her keeper of her doves, dove as she is herself. But here she knew that she did not exist, for nobody ever looked at her. Where, My Lord, is music bred—upon the instrument or within the ear that listens? The loveliness of woman is created in the eye of man. You talk, Timon, of Lucifer offending God by looking at him to see what he was like. That shows that you worship a male deity. A goddess would ask her worshiper first of all: ‘How am I looking?’

"You might well ask me now: 'Did not one of the castellan's sleek minions look for himself, and find out how sweet she was?' But no; this is the story of the Emperor's new clothes, and is told to prove to you the power of human vanity. These beautiful boys were too fearful of being found impossibly dull, and unfit for their office. They were busy discussing Aristotle and lecturing upon the doctrines and mysteries of ancient and medieval scholastics.

"The Emperor himself, you will remember, believed that he was finely attired. So also the maid herself believed that she was not worth looking at. Still, in her heart she could hardly believe it, and this everlasting struggle between instinct and reason devoured her, as much as it did Hercules himself, or any other traditional hero of tragedy. Sometimes she would stand and look at the mighty coats of armor in the corridors of Angelshorn. These looked like real men. She felt that they would have been partisans of hers, had they not all been hollow. She became shy of all people, and wild, in the loneliness of the brilliant circle of the house. But she became also fierce, and might well, on a dark night, have put fire to the castle.

"In the end, as you, Timon, could not stand your existence, but

meant to jump into the water from Langebro, she could no longer stand her nonexistence at Angelshorn. But your task was easier. You wanted only to disappear, while she had to create herself. She had been for such a long time brought up in the wicked heresies of those falsifiers of truth, and so thoroughly tortured and threatened with the stake, that she was by now ready to deny any god. Abu Mirrah had a ring which made him invisible, but when he wanted to marry the Princess Ebadu, and could not get it off his finger, he cut off the finger with it. In this way Calypso resolved to cut off her long hair, and to chop off her young breasts, so as to be like her acquaintances. This deed of darkness she made up her mind to commit one summer night."

At this point of Miss Malin's narrative, the girl, who had hitherto stared straight in front of her, turned her wild eyes toward the narrator, and began to listen with a new kind of interest, as if she herself were hearing the tale for the first time. Miss Malin had an opulent power of imagination. But still the story, correct or not, was to the heroine herself a symbol, a dressed-up image of what she had in reality gone through, and she acknowledged it by her clear deep glance at the old woman.

"At midnight, My Lord," Miss Malin went on,

“the maiden got up to go to this dismal rendezvous. She took a candlestick in one hand, and a sharp hatchet in the other, like to Judith when she went to kill Holophernes. But what darkness, my friends, what darkness in the castle of Angelshorn, compared to that of the tent of Dothaim. The angels must have turned away and wept.

“She walked all through the house to a room in which she knew there was a long looking-glass on the wall. It was a room that was never used; nobody would come there. The lost girl swept down her clothes to her waist, and fixed her eyes on the glass, not allowing herself any thought, lest it should frighten her from her purpose.

“In that same midnight hour newly married young men, within nuptial chambers, were trembling, unveiling, fondling and kissing the bodies of their young brides. In the light of five hundred wax candles great ladies were turning the destinies of nations by lifting their shoulders in their low frocks. Even in the houses of ill fame of Naples, the old brown *madamas*, dragging their girls to the little candle on the bed-table, and pulling down their bodices, were bargaining with their customers for higher fees. Calypso, while lowering her eyes to the whiteness of her bosom within the dim mirror, for she had never seen herself naked in a mirror, was trying the

edge of her ax upon her little finger.

“At that moment she saw in the looking-glass a big figure behind her own. It seemed to move, and she turned around. There was nobody there, but on the wall was an enormous old painting which had grown dark with age, but in which the lighter parts, illuminated by her candle, sprang out. It represented a scene out of the life of the nymphs, fauns, and satyrs, with the centaurs, playing in groves and on the flowery plains. It had been brought, many years ago, from Italy by one of the old lords of the house, but it had been thought a very indecent picture even before the time of the present Count, and had been removed from the living-rooms. It was not a well-painted picture, but there were a lot of figures in it. In the foreground three young naked nymphs, silvery as white roses, were holding up branches of trees.

“Calypso walked all along the huge picture, holding up her candle, and gazing gravely at it. That it was a scandalous picture she lacked knowledge to see; neither did she doubt that it was a true representation of beings actually existing. She looked with great interest at the satyrs and centaurs. In her lonely existence she had developed a passionate tenderness for animals. To the mind of Count August the existence of

the brute creation was an enigma and a tragedy, and there were no animals at Angelshorn. But to the girl they seemed sweeter than human beings, and she was delighted to find that there were people who possessed so many of their characteristics. But what surprised and overwhelmed her was the fact that these strong and lovely beings were obviously concentrating their attention upon following, adoring, and embracing young girls of her own age, and of her own figure and face, that the whole thing was done in their honor and inspired by their charms.

“She looked at them for a very long time. In the end she returned to her mirror and stood there contemplating herself within it. She had the sense of art of her uncle himself, and knew by instinct what things harmonized together. Now a hitherto unexperienced feeling of a great harmony came upon her.

“She knew now that she had friends in the world. By right of her looks she might step into the mellow golden light, the blue sky and gray clouds, and the deep brown shadows of these plains and olive groves. Her heart swelled with gratitude and pride, for here they all looked at her and recognized her as their own. The god Dionysos himself, who was present, looked her, laughingly, straight into the eyes.

"She looked around the room and saw, in showcases, what she had never seen before at Angelshorn: woman's clothes, fans, jewels, and little shoes. All these had belonged to her great-grandmother. For, strange to say, the Count had had a grandmother. He had even had a mother, and there had been a time, when, *bon gré mal gré*, he had made a close acquaintance with the body of a fair young woman. He had a tenderness for his grandmother, who had birched him when he was a child. In the very center of his abbey he had left her boudoir untouched. A faint perfume of attar of roses still lived here.

"The girl spent the night in the room. She put on and took off one after the other of the court robes, the pearl strings, and diamonds. She looked from the glass to the painting for the applause of the centaurs—in what attire did they like her best? She could have no doubt about it. At last she left the room to go to the room of the castellan. Before she closed the door she gently kissed the nymphs, as high up as she could place her kiss, as if they had been her beloved friends.

"She walked up the stairs very gently, and went close to the great bed of her uncle. There he was, between the yellow silk hangings, his eyes shut, his nose in the air, white in a fine white

nightshirt. The girl still had on a great yellow-brocade frock, and she stood by his bedside like Psyche beside the couch of Eros. Psyche had feared to see a monster, and had found the god of love. But Calypso had held her uncle to be a minister of truth, an arbiter of taste, an Apollo himself, and what did she find? A poor little doll stuffed with sawdust, a caricature of a skull. She blushed deeply. Had she been afraid of this creature—she, who was the sister of the nymphs and had centaurs for playmates? She was a hundred times as strong as he.

“Had he woke up then, and seen her by his bedside, still with her hatchet in her hand, he might have died from fear, or it might have done him good in some other way. But he slept on—God knows what his dreams were—and she did not cut off his head. She gave him instead a little swift epigram out of her French book, which had once been made about a king who also imagined himself much-beloved:

*Ci-git Louis, ce  
pauvre roi.  
L'on dit qu'il fut bon—  
mais à quoi?*

And she did not bear him the slightest grudge; for she was not a freed slave, but a conqueror with a mighty train, who could afford to forget.

“She left the room as quietly as she



had come, and blew out the candle, for in the summer night she could find her way without it. All around her the whole seraglio was silent; only as she passed a door she heard two of the young boys arguing upon divine love. They might all have been dead as far as she was concerned. As she lifted the heavy medieval lock of the front door she lifted their weight off her heart.

“When she came out it was raining. The night itself wanted to touch her.

“She walked over the moors, grave as Ceres herself with a thunderbolt borrowed from Jove in her hand, who, even as she knits her brows, smells of strawberries and honey. Around the horizon the corn-lightnings were playing in her honor. She let her frock trail over the heather. Why should she not? Had a young highwayman met her, she might have made him her husband then and there, until death had them parted; or she might have chopped off his head, and God knows which fate would have been more to be envied him.

“She had no gay ditty on her lips. She had been seriously brought up as a good Protestant, and life had taught her no frivolity. In her heart she repeated the hymn of good Paul Gerhardt, altering it as to the personal pronoun only:

*Against me who  
can stand?  
The lightnings in my*

*hand.*  
*Who dares to bring*  
*distress*  
*Where I decide to bless?*

"In the early morning she came to the house where I was staying. She was wet all through like a tree in the garden. She knew of me, for I am her godmother, and she felt that I had knowledge of, and might tell her more about, nymphs and centaurs. She found me getting into my carriage to go to the bath of Norderney. In this way fate drove us together, to be, in the end, like yourself, Mr. Timon, cured by salt water."

"And to shine above them," the Cardinal said, as gently as he had all the time been listening to the tale of the old woman, "a Stella Maris in the darkness of our loft."

"Madame, indeed," said Jonathan, "I do not know if you will think it strange, but I have never in my life, until you told me so now, thought that fair women could suffer. I held them to be precious flowers, which must be looked after carefully."

"And what do you feel now that I have told you so?" Miss Malin asked him.

"Madame," said the young man after having thought it over, "I feel how edifying is the thought that toward women we are always in the wrong."

"You are an honest young man," said Miss Malin. "Your side

hurts you now, where your rib was once taken out of you."

"If I had been in the castle of Angelshorn," he went on, in high agitation, "I should not have minded dying to serve this lady."

"Come, Jonathan and Calypso," said Miss Malin, "it would be sinful and blasphemous were you two to die unmarried. You have been brought here from Angelshorn and Assens, into each other's arms. You are hers, and she is yours, and the Cardinal and I, who stand you in parents' stead, will give you our blessing." The two young people stared at each other. "If anybody will say," said Miss Malin, "that you are not her equal in birth, I shall answer him that you belong to the order of knighthood of the hayloft of Norderney, outside of which no member of it can marry." The girl, in great excitement, rose half up and stood on her knees. "Did you not see, Calypso," Miss Malin addressed herself kindly to her, "how he followed you here, and how, the moment he heard that you were staying here with me, nothing in the world could induce him to go with the boat? Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

"Is that true?" asked the girl, turning her eyes upon the boy with such an intense and frantic look as if life and death for her depended upon his answer.

"Yes, that is true," said Jonathan. It was not in the least true. He had not even, at the time, been aware of the girl's existence. But the power of imagination of the old woman was enough to sway anybody off his feet. The girl's face, at his words, suddenly paled into a rare pearly white. Her eyes grew bigger and darker. They shone at him like stars with a moisture deeper than tears, and at the sight of her changed face Jonathan sank upon his knees before her in the hay.

"Oh, Jonathan," said Miss Malin, "are you going to thank the Baron, upon your knees, that he took the trouble about you?"

"Yes, Madame," said the young man.

"And you, Calypso," she asked the girl, "do you want him to look at you forever and ever?"

"Yes," said the girl.

Miss Malin looked at them triumphantly. "Then, My Lord," she said to the Cardinal, "will you consent to marry these two people, who stand in great need of it?"

The Cardinal's eyes gravely sought their faces, which had now colored as strongly as if they had been in front of a high fire. "Yes," he said. "Lift me up." The bridegroom-to-be helped him to rise.

"You will," said Miss Malin, "have a Cardinal to marry you,

and a Nat-og-Dag for a bridesmaid, which no one will have hereafter. Your marriage must be in every way a more intense affair than the lukewarm unions generally celebrated around us, for you must see her, listen to her, feel her, know her with the energy which you meant to use for jumping into the sea from Langebro. One kiss will make it out for the birth of twins, and at dawn you shall celebrate your golden wedding."

"My Lord," she said to the Cardinal, "the circumstances being so unusual—for we have no need of procreation, seeing that the boat can hold no more than we are, and we run but little risk of fornication, I feel; and as to the company of one another, we cannot escape it if we would—I think that you will have to make us out a new marriage rite."

"I am aware of that," said the Cardinal.

To make a clear space in the middle of the circle, Miss Malin lifted up the little lamp in her clawlike hand, and Calypso moved the bread and the keg away. The dog, at this rearrangement of the group, got up and walked around them uneasily. In the end it settled down close to the young bride.

"Kneel down, my children," said the old priest.

He stood up, his huge and heavy figure looming over them in the large, half-dark room. At

this moment, as the wind had risen a little, they heard the sighing of the waters all around and beneath them.

"I cannot," said the Cardinal very slowly, "here tonight call upon the magnificence of the cathedral, or the presence of a congregation, to sanction this covenant. I have no time to teach or prepare you. You must, therefore, accept my profession to you solely on my authority. You two, I have seen," he went on after a pause, "have had your faith in the cohesion and justice of life shaken. Have faith in me now; I will help you. Have you a ring?"

The young people had no ring, and were much put out by the lack of it, but Miss Malin took off a very magnificent diamond, which she handed to the old man.

"Jonathan," said he, "place this ring on this girl's finger." The boy did so, and the Cardinal placed a hand on the head of each of the kneeling people.

"Jonathan," said the Cardinal again, "do you now believe that you are married?"

"Yes," said Jonathan.

"And you, Calypso?" the Cardinal asked the girl.

"Yes," she whispered.

"And that you will," said the Cardinal, "from now, love and honor each other until the end of your lives, and even in death and

eternity?"

"Yes," they said.

"Then," said the Cardinal, "you are married."

Miss Malin stood by, erect, holding the lamp like a sibyl.

The hours of rest in the hayloft had not strengthened the Cardinal, who was probably past all his strength. He was less steady in his movements than when he had come out of the boat. His figure seemed to sway, strangely, in time to the sound of the water.

"As to the state of marriage," he said, "and the matter of love I suppose that neither of you knows anything at all about these things?" The two young people shook their heads. "I cannot," said the Cardinal again, "here make the Scripture and the Fathers of the Church bear witness to my words to you. I cannot even, for I am very tired, call up the texts and examples wherewith to enlighten and instruct you. You will, again, accept my profession on my authority as a very old man who has been throughout a long and strange life a student of divine matters. These matters, I tell you, are divine. Do you, Jonathan, expect and hold them to be so?"

"Yes," said Jonathan.

"And you, Calypso?" he asked the bride.

"Yes," she said.

"Then that is all,"

said the Cardinal.

As he did not appear to be going to say any more, the married young people, after a moment, got up, but they were too strongly moved to be able to get away. Standing there, they looked at each other for the first time since they had been called out to be married, and this one look took away all self-consciousness from both of them. They went back to their places in the hay.

“As to you and me, Madame,” said the Cardinal, speaking over their heads to Miss Malin, but apparently forgetting that he was no longer in the pulpit, for he went on talking as solemnly as he had done when performing the marriage ceremony, “who are only onlookers upon this occasion, and who know more about the matters of love and marriage, we will consider the lesson which they, above and before all other things, teach us about the tremendous courage of the Creator of this world. Every human being has, I believe, at times given room to the idea of creating a world himself. The Pope, in a flattering way, encouraged these thoughts in me when I was a young man. I reflected then that I might, had I been given omnipotence and a free hand, have made a fine world. I might have bethought me of the trees and rivers, of the different keys in music, of friendship, and



innocence; but upon my word and honor, I should not have dared to arrange these matters of love and marriage as they are, and my world should have lost sadly thereby. What an overwhelming lesson to all artists! Be not afraid of absurdity; do not shrink from the fantastic. Within a dilemma, choose the most unheard-of, the most dangerous, solution. Be brave, be brave! Ah, Madame, we have got much to learn."

Upon this, he fell into deep thought.

As they sat down, their former positions were not much changed, except that the newly married people now sat closer together, and held each other's hands. Sometimes they also turned their faces toward each other. The lantern stood on the floor in front of them. Miss Malin and the Cardinal, after their effort in marrying them, remained silent for about half an hour, and drank a few drops out of the keg of gin.

Miss Malin sat up straight, but by now she looked like a corpse of twenty-four hours. She was deeply moved and happy, as if she had really given away a daughter in marriage. Long shudders ran through her from head to feet. When she at last took up the conversation again, her voice was faint, but she smiled. She had probably been reflecting upon marriage and the Garden of Eden.

"Do you, My

Lord," she asked, "believe in the fall of man?"

The Cardinal thought over her question for some time, then he bent forward, his elbows on his knees, and pushed back the bandage a little from his brow.

"This is a question," he said, in a voice slightly changed, thicker than before, but also with a great deal more energy in it, as if he had at the same time pushed back ten years of his age, "upon which I have thought much. It is pleasant that I shall get an opportunity for talking of it tonight.

"I am convinced," he declared, "that there has been a fall, but I do not hold that it is man who has fallen. I believe that there has been a fall of the divinity. We are now serving an inferior dynasty of heaven."

Miss Malin had been prepared for an ingenious argument, but at this speech she was shocked, and for a moment held her little hands to her ears. "These are terrible words to the ear of a Legitimist," she cried.

"What are they, then," asked the Cardinal solemnly, "to the lips of a Legitimist? I have detained them for seventy years. But you asked me, Madame, and, if the truth must out, this is a good place and night for it. At some time there has taken place, in heaven, a tremendous overturning, equal to the French Revolution upon earth,

and its after-effects. The world of today is, like the France of today, in the hands of a Louis Philippe."

"There are traditions still," he went on, "from *le Grand Monarque* and *le Grand Siècle*. But no human being with a feeling for greatness can possibly believe that the God who created the stars, the sea, and the desert, the poet Homer and the giraffe, is the same God who is now making, and upholding, the King of Belgium, the Poetical School of Schwaben, and the moral ideas of our day. We two may at last speak about it. We are serving Louis Philippe, a human God, much as the King of France is a bourgeois King."

Miss Malin stared at him, pale, her mouth a little open.

"Madame," he said, "we who are by birth the *grande*s of the King, and hereditary office-holders of his court, and who have the code of *le Grand Monarque* in our veins, have a duty toward the legitimate king, whatever we think of him. We must keep up his glory. For the people must not doubt the greatness of the king, or suspect any weakness of his, and the responsibility for keeping up their faith rests upon you and me, Madame. The barber of the court was not capable of keeping his own counsel; he had to whisper to the reeds of the king's asses' ears. But we—are we barbers? No,

Madame, we are no barbers."

"Have we not done our best?" asked Miss Malin proudly.

"Yes," said the Cardinal, "we have done our best. When you look around, Madame, you see everywhere the achievements of the faithful, who have worked, nameless, for the king's honor. I could name you many examples out of history, of which I have thought. I shall give you a few only. God made the shell, which is a pretty object, but not more than what even Louis Philippe might have hit upon when he was playing with a pair of dividers. Out of the shell we made all the art of the rococo, which is a charming jest, in the true spirit of the *Grand Monarque*. And if you read the history of great people, you will find that the lords and ladies of the bedchamber have been at work, serving our master of blessed memory. The Pope Alexander and his children, according to the latest historical researches, were a group of pleasant people, given to gardening and house decoration, and full of family affection, *et voilà tout*—obviously the handwork of Louis Philippe. But out of that indifferent material we have made our figures of the Borgias. You will find very nearly the same thing if you go into the facts about the great reputations of history. Or even, Madame, if you do not mind," the old man

went on, "death: What is it, nowadays, at the hand of Louis Philippe? A negation, a decay, not even in the best of taste. But look at what we have made of it, faithful to our gone Lord: the Imperial Mausoleum of Escorial, Madame, the 'Funeral March' of Herr Ludwig von Beethoven. How could we ever have made those— poor human beings as we are, and, moreover, ourselves bound to be part in this meager affair —if we had not in our hearts the unquenchable love for our departed Lord, the great adventurer, to whom our family did first swear its oath of allegiance."

"But with all that," he went on, very gravely, "the end is nearing. I hear the cocks crow. King Louis Philippe cannot last. In his cause the blood of Roland himself would be shed in vain. He has all the qualities of a good bourgeois, and none of the vices of a *Grand Seigneur*. He claims no rank except that of the first citizen of his kingdom, and no privileges except on account of his loyalty to the bourgeois code of morals. When it comes to that, the days of royalty are counted. I will pronounce a prophecy, Madame: that good King of France will not last another thirteen years. And the good God, whom Louis Philippe and his bourgeoisie worship today, he has all the virtues of a righteous

human being; he claims no divine privileges except by virtue of his virtues. We, we no more expected a moral attitude in our God than we meant to hold our great King responsible to the penal law. The humane God must share the fate of the bourgeois King. I was myself brought up by humane people to have faith in a humane God. It was to the highest extent intolerable to me. Ah, Madame, what a revelation, what a bliss to my heart, when, in the nights of Mexico, I felt the great traditions rise up again of a God who did not give a pin for our commandments. In this manner, Madame, we are dying for a lost cause."

"To get our reward in paradise," said Miss Malin.

"Oh, no, Madame," said the old man, "we shall not get into paradise, you or I. Look at the people whom the King Louis Philippe today decorates, elevates to peer's rank and places in the great offices. They are safely bourgeois, all of them; no name of the old aristocracy appears in the list. Neither you nor I succeed in pleasing the Lord nowadays; we even irritate him a little, and he is not beyond showing it in his behavior toward us. The old nobility, whose manner and very names bring back the traditions of the Great Monarch, must needs be a little trying to King Louis Philippe."

"So we have no

hope of heaven, you or I?" asked Miss Malin proudly.

"I wonder if you would be keen to get in there," said the old Cardinal, "if you were first allowed a peep into the place. It must be the rendezvous of the bourgeoisie. Madame, to my mind there never was a great artist who was not a bit of a charlatan; nor a great king, nor a god. The quality of charlatanry is indispensable in a court, or a theater, or in paradise. Thunder and lightning, the new moon, a nightingale, a young girl—all these are bits of charlatanry, of a divine swank. So is the *galerie de glaces* at Versailles. But King Louis Philippe has no drop of blood of the charlatan in him; he is genuinely reliable all through. Paradise, these days, is very likely the same. You and I, Madame, were not brought up to a reasonable content. We shall cut a finer figure in hell. We were trained for it.

"It is a satisfaction, Madame, to do a thing that one has learned well. It must be a satisfaction to you, I am sure, to dance the minuet. Let us take an example. Let us say that I have been trained from a child to do something. For argument's sake, let us say to do rope-dancing. I have been taught it, beaten to learn it. If I fall down and break my bones, I still have to get up again on my rope. My

mother has wept over me, and has still encouraged me. She has had to go without bread to pay the vaulter who teaches me. And I have become a good rope-dancer, say the best rope-dancer in the world. It is a fine thing, then, to be a rope-dancer. And I shall be amply rewarded when, upon some great occasion, at the entertainment of a great foreign monarch, my King says to his royal guest: 'You must really see this, Sire and my Brother; this is my finest show, my servant Hamilcar, the rope-dancer!' But what if he should say, Madame, 'There is not much sense in rope-dancing. It is a rough performance; I am going to stop it?' What sort of performance, on the part of the King, should that be to me?

"Have you been to Spain, Madame?" he asked the old lady.

"Oh, yes," said Miss Malin, "a beautiful country, My Lord. I had serenades sung under my window, and my portrait painted by Monsieur Goya himself."

"Have you seen a bullfight there?" the Cardinal asked.

"Yes," said Miss Malin. "It is a very picturesque thing, though not to my taste."

"It is a picturesque thing," said the Cardinal. "And what do you imagine, Madame, that the bull thinks of it? The plebeian bull may well think: 'God have mercy on me, what



terrible conditions here. What disasters, what a run of bad luck. But it must be endured.' And he would be deeply thankful, moved even to humble tears, were the King, in the midst of the bullfight, to send directions to have it stopped, out of compassion for him. But the purebred fighting bull falls in with it, and says: 'Lo, this is a bullfight.' He will have his blood up straight away, and he will fight and die, because otherwise there would be no bullfight out of the thing at all. He will also be known for many years as that black bull which put up such a fine fight, and killed the matador. But if, in the middle of it, when this bull's blood had already flowed, the King chose to stop it, what would the true fighting bull think of it? He might go for the audience, even for the master of ceremonies then. He would roar at them: 'You should have thought of this before!' Madame, the King should have his show. He has bred and reared me for it, and I am ready to fight and die before the Great Monarch, when he comes in state to see me. But I am hanged," he said after a moment, with great energy, "if I care to perform before Louis Philippe."

"Ah, but wait," said Miss Malin. "I have thought of something else. Perhaps you are mistaken in your ideas of the sense of humor of King Louis Philippe. He

may have a quite different taste from yours and mine, and may like a world turned upside down, like that Empress of Russia who, to amuse herself, made her old Councilors, the tears running down their faces, dance in a ballet before her, and her ballet-dancers sit in council. That, My Lord, might well be his idea of a joke. I will tell you a little story to make myself clear, and it fits in well, since we have been talking of rope-dancing.

“When I was in Vienna twenty years ago,” she began, “a pretty boy with big blue eyes made a great stir there by dancing on a rope blindfolded. He danced with wonderful grace and skill, and the blindfolding was genuine, the cloth being tied around his eyes by a person out of the audience. His performance was the great sensation of the season, and he was sent for to dance before the Emperor and Empress, the archdukes and archduchesses, and the court. The great oculist, Professor Heimholz, was present. He had been sent for by the Emperor, since everybody was discussing the problem of clairvoyance. But at the end of the show he rose up and called out: ‘Your Majesty,’ he said, in great agitation, ‘and your Imperial Highnesses, this is all humbug, and a cheat.’

“ ‘It cannot be humbug,’ said the court

oculist, 'I have myself tied the cloth around the boy's eyes most conscientiously.'

" 'It is all humbug and a cheat,' the great professor indignantly insisted. 'That child was born blind.' "

Miss Malin made a little pause. "What," she said, "if your Louis Philippe shall say, on seeing us cutting such fine figures in hell: This is all humbug. These people have been in hell from their birth." She laughed a little.

"Madame," said the Cardinal after a silence, "you have a great power of imagination, and a fine courage."

"Oh, I am a Nat-og-Dag," said Miss Malin modestly.

"But are you not," said the Cardinal, "a little —"

"Mad?" asked the old lady. "I thought that you were aware of that, My Lord."

"No," said he, "that was not what I meant to say. But a little hard on the King of France. I may perhaps be in a position to understand him better than you. Bourgeois he is, but not canaille.

"I shall also tell you a story," went on the old man, "seeing that I have not yet contributed to the night's entertainment. I shall tell it just to illustrate that there are—with your permission, Madame—worse things than perdition, and I shall call it—" he reflected a

moment—"I shall call it  
'The Wine of the  
Tetrarch'."

"As, then, upon  
the first Wednesday after  
Easter," the Cardinal  
began, "the Apostle  
Simon, called Peter, was  
walking down the streets  
of Jerusalem, so deeply  
absorbed in the thought  
of the resurrection that he  
did not know whether he  
was walking upon the  
pavement or was being  
carried along in the air, he  
noticed, in passing the  
Temple, that a man was  
standing by a pillar  
waiting for him. As their  
eyes met, the stranger  
stepped forward and  
addressed him. 'Wast  
thou not also,' he asked,  
'with Jesus of Nazareth?'

" 'Yes, yes, yes,'  
Peter replied quickly.

" 'Then I should  
much like to have speech  
with you,' said the man. 'I  
do not know what to do.  
Will you come inside the  
inn close hereby, and  
have a drink with me?'  
Peter, because he could  
not disengage himself  
from his thoughts  
sufficiently to find an  
excuse, accepted, and  
soon the two were seated  
together inside the inn.

"The stranger  
seemed to be well known  
there. He at once  
obtained a table to  
himself at the end of the  
room and out of earshot  
of the other guests who  
from time to time entered  
the inn and went out  
again, and he also  
ordered the best wine for  
himself and the Apostle.  
Peter now looked at the  
man, and found him an

impressive figure. He was a swarthy, strongly built, proud young man. He was badly dressed and had on a much-patched goatskin cloak, but with it he wore a fine crimson silk scarf, and he had a gold chain around his neck, and upon his hands many heavy gold rings, one of which had a large emerald in it. It now seemed to Peter that he had seen the man before, in the midst of terrible fear and turbulence; still, he did not remember where.

“ ‘If you are indeed one of the followers of the Nazarene,’ he said, ‘I want to ask you two questions. I will tell you my reasons, too, for asking them, as we go on.’

“ ‘I shall be glad if I can help you in any way,’ said Peter, still absent-minded.

“ ‘Well,’ said the man, ‘first: Is it true, what they tell of this Rabbi whom you served, that he has risen from the dead?’

“ ‘Yes, it is true,’ said Peter, even feeling his own heart to swell at his proclamation.

“ ‘Nay, I heard rumors about it,’ said the man, ‘but I did not know for sure. And is it true that he told you himself, before he was crucified, that he would rise?’

“ ‘Yes,’ said the Apostle, ‘he told us. We knew that it would happen.’

“ ‘Do you think, then,’ the stranger asked,

'that every word which he has spoken is certain to come true?'

" 'Nothing in the world is as sure as that,' Peter answered. The man sat silent for a while.

" 'I will tell you why I ask you this,' he suddenly said. 'It is because a friend of mine was crucified with him on Friday at the place of a skull. You saw him there, I think. To him this Rabbi of yours promised that he should be with him in paradise on the very same day. Do you then believe that he did go to paradise on Friday?'

" 'Yes, he is sure to have gone there and he is there now,' said Peter. The man again was silent.

" 'Well, that is good,' he said. 'He was my friend.'

"Here a young boy of the inn brought the wine which the man had ordered. The man poured some of it out into their glasses, looked at it, and put it down again. 'And this,' he said, 'is the other thing that I wanted to speak with you about. I have tried many wines within the last few days, and they all tasted bad to me. I do not know what has happened to the wine of Jerusalem. It has neither flavor nor body any longer. I think it may be due to the earthquake which we had on Friday afternoon; it has turned it all bad.'

" 'I do not think that this wine is bad,' said Peter, to encourage the stranger, for he looked

sad as death.

“ ‘Is it not?’ the man said hopefully, and drank a little of it. ‘Yes, this also is bad,’ he said, as he put down his glass. ‘If you call it good, perhaps you have not much knowledge of wine? I have, and good wine is my great pleasure. Now I do not know what to do.

“ ‘Now about that friend of mine, Phares,’ he took up the thread of the conversation, ‘I will tell you all about how he was taken prisoner, and put to death. He was a robber on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem. On that road there came along a transport of wine which the Emperor of Rome sent as a present to the tetrarch Herodes, and amongst it was a hogshead of red Capri wine, which was beyond price. One evening, in this same place where we are now, I was talking to Phares. I said to him: “I would give my heart to drink that red wine of the tetrarch’s.” He said: “For the sake of my love of you, and to show you that I am not a much lesser man than you, I will kill the overseer of this transport and have the hogshead of red wine buried under such and such a cedar on the mountain, and you and I will drink the wine of the tetrarch together.” He did indeed do all this, but as he came into Jerusalem to find me, he was recognized by one of the people of the transport, who had escaped, and thrown into prison, and

condemned to be crucified.

" I was told of it, and I walked about in Jerusalem in the night, thinking of a means to help him escape. In the morning, on passing the steps of the Temple, I saw there an old beggar, whom I had seen many times before, who had a bad leg, all bandaged up, and was also mad. In his madness he would scream out, and prophesy, complaining of his fate and cursing the governors of the town, proclaiming many bad things against the tetrarch and his wife. As he was mad, people only used to laugh at him. But this morning it happened that a centurion was passing with his men, and when he heard what the beggar said of the tetrarch's wife he was angry. He told the beggar that if he did this again he would make him sleep in the prison of Jerusalem, and he would have him dealt twenty-five strokes of a stick in the evening, and twenty-five in the morning, to teach him to speak reverently about high people.

" I listened, and thought: this is the opportunity for me. So in the course of the day I had my beard and hair shaved off, I dyed my face in nut oil, and dressed myself in rags, and I also bandaged up my right leg, but in those bandages I had hidden a strong, sharp file and a long rope. In the evening, when I went to the steps



of the Temple, the old beggar had been so frightened that he had not come, so I took his place there myself. Just as the watch was passing, I cried out loudly, in the voice of the mad beggar, the worst curses I could think of against Cæsar in Rome himself, and, as I had thought, the watch took hold of me and brought me to the prison, and no one could recognize me in my rags. I was given, there, twenty-five strokes, and I took note of the face of the man who beat me, for the sake of the future; but with a piece of silver I bribed the turnkey to shut me up for the night in the prison where Phares was kept, which was very high up in the prison, the which, as you know, is built into the rock.

“ Phares fell down and kissed my feet, and he gave me some water that he had, but later we set to work to file through the iron bar of the window. It was high up, and he had to stand upon my shoulders, or I upon his, but by early morning we broke it, and then tied the rope onto the broken bar. Phares lowered himself down first, until he came to the end of the rope, which was not quite long enough, and then he let himself fall. Then I got out, but I was weak, and too slow at it, and it happened that just at that hour a batch of soldiers came to the place with a prisoner. They had torches with them, and

one of them caught sight of me as I was hanging onto the rope on the wall. Now Phares could have got away, if he had run, but he would not go before he had seen what would happen to me, and in this way we were both taken once more, and they saw who I was.

“ ‘That is how it happened,’ said the stranger. ‘But then you tell me that Phares is now in paradise.’

“ ‘All this,’ said Peter, who had, though, been listening only with half an ear, ‘I hold to be very brave of you, and it was well done to risk your life for your friend.’ At that he sighed deeply. ‘Oh, I have lived too long in the woods to be frightened of an owl,’ said the stranger. ‘Has anybody told you of me that I was the sort that runs away from danger?’

“ ‘No,’ said Peter. ‘But then you tell me,’ he said after a moment, ‘that you, too, were made prisoner. Still, since you are here, you got off somehow?’

“ ‘Yes; I got off,’ said the man, and gave Peter a strange deep glance. ‘I meant, then, to revenge Phares’s death. But since he is in paradise I do not see that I need to worry. And now I do not know what to do. Shall I dig up this hogshead of the tetrarch’s wine and drink it?’

“ ‘It will be sad to you without your friend,’ said Peter, and his eyes filled with such tears as were still left in him after

this last week. He thought that he ought perhaps to reproach the man with the theft of the tetrarch's wine, but too many recollections welled up in his own heart.

" 'No, it is not that of which I am thinking,' said the stranger, 'but if that wine also has gone bad and gives me no pleasure, what am I to do then?'

"Peter sat for a little while in his own thoughts. 'Friend,' he said, 'there are other things in life to give you pleasure than the wine of the tetrarch.'

" 'Yes, I know,' said the stranger, 'but what if the same thing has happened to them? I have two lovely wives waiting for me at home, and just before this happened I purchased a virgin of twelve years. I have not seen her since. I could try them, if I chose. But the earthquake may have affected them as well, so that they may have neither flavor nor body, and what shall I do then?'

"Now Peter began to wish that this man would stop his complaints and leave him to himself. 'Why,' he asked, 'do you come to me about this?'

" 'You remind me,' said the stranger. 'I will tell you. I have been informed that your Rabbi, on the night before he died, gave a party to his followers, and that at that time a special wine was served, which was very rare and had some highly precious body in it. Have

you, now, any more of this wine, and will you consent to sell it to me? I will give you your price.'

"Peter stared at the stranger. 'Oh, God, oh, God,' he cried, so highly affected that he upset his wine, which ran onto the floor, 'you do not know what you are saying. This wine which we drank on Thursday night, the Emperor of Rome cannot pay for one drop of it.' His heart was so terribly wrung that he rocked to and fro in his seat. Still, in the midst of his grief the words of the Lord, that he was to be a fisher of men, were brought back to him, and he reflected that it might be his duty to help this man, who seemed in some deep distress. He turned to him again, but as he was looking at him it came over him that of all people in the world, this young man was the one whom he could not help. To strengthen himself he called up one of the words of the Lord himself.

" 'My son,' he said kindly and gravely, 'take up thine cross and follow him.' The stranger, just at the same moment as the Apostle, had been about to speak. Now he stopped and looked very darkly at Peter. 'My cross!' he cried. 'Where is my cross? Who is to take up my cross?'

" 'No one but yourself can take up your cross,' said Peter, 'but He will help you to carry it. Have patience and strength. I will tell you

much more about all this.'

" 'What have you to tell me about it?' said the stranger. 'It seems to me that you know nothing of it. Help? Who is it who wants help to carry the sort of cross which the carpenters of Jerusalem make in these days? Not I, you may be sure. That bow-legged Cyrenean would never have had the opportunity to exhibit his strength on my behalf. You talk of strength and patience,' he went on after a moment, still highly agitated, 'but I have never known a man as strong as myself. Look,' he said, and pulling back his cloak he showed Peter his chest and shoulders, crossed by many terrible deep white scars. 'My cross! The cross of Phares was to the right, and the cross of the man Achaz, who was never worth much, to the left. I should have taken up my cross better than any of them. Do you not think that I should have lasted more than six hours? I do not think much of that, I tell you. Wherever I have been, I have been a leader of men, and they have looked to me. Do not believe, because now I do not know what to do, that I have not been used to telling others to come and go as I liked.'

"At the disdainful tone of this speech Peter was about to lose his patience with the stranger, but he had promised himself, since he cut off Malchus's ear, to control his temper, so

he said nothing.

"After a while the man looked at him, as if impressed by his silence. 'And you,' he said, 'who are a follower of this Prophet, what do you think is likely to happen to yourself now?' Peter's face, marred by sorrow, cleared and softened. His whole countenance radiated hope. 'I trust and believe,' he said, 'that my faith, though it be tried with fire, be found unto praise and honor. I hope that it may be granted to me to suffer and die for my Lord. Sometimes, even, in these last nights,' he went on, speaking in a low voice, 'I have thought that at the end of the road a cross might await me.' Having spoken thus he dared not look up to meet the other's eyes. He added quickly, 'Although you may think that I am boasting, and that I am too low for that.'

" 'No,' said the stranger, 'I think it very likely that all this of which you have spoken will indeed happen to you.'

"This confidence in his own hopes struck Peter as a most unexpected and generous piece of friendliness in the stranger. His heart melted with gratitude. He blushed like a young bride. For the first time he felt a real interest in his companion, and it seemed to him that he ought to do something for him in return for the lovely things that he had said to him. 'I am sorry,' he said gently, 'that I have not been able to

help you in what weighs upon your soul. But indeed I am hardly in command of myself, so much has happened to me in these last days.'

" 'Oh,' said the stranger, 'I hardly expected anything better.'

"In the course of our talk,' Peter said, 'you said a couple of times that you did not know what to do. Tell me in what matter it is that you are in such doubts. Even about this wine, of which you speak, I will try to advise you.' The stranger looked at him. 'I have not been talking of any particular matter,' he said. 'I do not know what to do at all. I do not know where such wine is found that will gladden my heart again. But I suppose,' he went on, after a little while, 'that I had better go and dig up that wine of the tetrarch's, and sleep with this girl that I told you of. I may as well try.'

"With these words he got up from the table and draped his cloak around him.

" 'Do not go yet,' Peter said. 'It seems to me that there are many things of which we ought to talk together.'

" 'I have to go in any case,' said the man. 'There is a transport of oil on its way from Hebron, which I must meet.'

" 'Are you trading in oil, then?' Peter asked. 'In a way,' said the man.

" 'But tell me, before you go,' said Peter, 'what is your name? For we might speak again together, some time, if I

knew where to find you?' The stranger was already standing in the door. He turned around and looked at Peter with hauteur and a slight scorn. He looked a magnificent figure. 'Did you not know my name?' he asked him. 'My name was cried all over the town. There was not one of the tame burghers of Jerusalem who did not shout it with all his might. "Barabbas," they cried, "Barabbas! Barabbas! Give us Barabbas." My name is Barabbas. I have been a great chief, and, as you said yourself, a brave man. My name shall be remembered.'

"And with these words he walked away."

As the Cardinal had finished his tale, Jonathan got up and changed the tallow candle in the lantern, for it had burned quite down, and was now flickering wildly up and down in its last convulsions.

He had no sooner done this than the girl at his side became deadly pale. Her eyes closed, and her whole figure seemed to sink together. Miss Malin asked her kindly if she felt sleepy, but she denied it with great energy, and might well do so. She had lived during this night as she had never lived before. She had faced death and had thrown herself nobly into the jaws of danger for the sake of her fellow-creatures. She had been the center of a brilliant circle, and she had even been married. She did not want to miss a single



moment of these pregnant hours. But during the next ten minutes she fell asleep time after time in spite of her efforts to keep awake, her young head rocking forward and back.

She at last consented to lie down to rest for a moment, and her husband arranged a couch for her in the hay, and took off his coat to spread over her. Still holding his hand she sank down, and looked, on the dark ground, like a lovely marble figure of the angel of death. The dog, which had stayed near her for the last hour, at once followed her, and, curling itself up, pressed close to her, its head on her knees.

Her young husband sat for some time watching her sleep, but after a little while he could no longer keep awake himself, and lay down at a little distance from her, but close enough so that he could still hold her hand. For a while he did not sleep, but looked sometimes at her, and sometimes at the erect figures of Miss Malin and the Cardinal. When he did at last fall asleep, in his sleep he made a sudden movement, thrusting himself forward, so that his head nearly touched the head of the girl, and their hair, upon the pillow of the hay, was mingled together. A moment later he sank into the same slumber as had his wife.

The two old people sat silent before

the light of the new candle, which, to begin with, burned only feebly. Miss Malin, who now looked as if she were not going to sleep for all eternity, regarded the sleepers with the benevolence of a successful creator. The Cardinal looked at her for a moment and then he evaded her eyes. After a while he began to undo the bandages around his head, and in doing so he kept his eyes fixed upon the face of the old lady in a strange stare.

"I had better get rid of these," he said, "now that morning is almost here."

"But will it not hurt you?" Miss Malin asked anxiously.

"No," he said, and went on with his occupation. After a moment he added: "It is not even my blood. You, Miss Nat-og-Dag, who have such an eye for the true noble blood, you ought to recognize the blue blood of Cardinal Hamilcar."

Miss Malin did not move, but her white face changed a little.

"The blood of Cardinal Hamilcar?" she asked in a slightly less steady voice. "Yes," he said, "the blood of that noble old man. On my head. And on my hands as well. For I struck him on the head with a beam which had fallen down, before the boat arrived to rescue us early this morning."

For quite two or three minutes there was a

deep silence in the hayloft. Only the dog stirred, whining a little in its sleep as it poked its head further into the clothes of the young girl. The bandaged man and the old woman did not let go the hold of each other's eyes. He slowly finished taking off the long, red-stained linen strips, and laid them down. Freed of these, he had a broad, red, puffed face, and dark hair.

"God rest the soul of that noble man," said Miss Malin at last. "And who are you?"

The man's face changed a little at her words. "Is that what you ask me?" he said. "Is it of me that you are thinking, and not of him?"

"Oh, we need not think of him, you and I," she said. "Who are you?"

"My name," said the man, "is Kasparson. I am the Cardinal's valet."

"You must tell me more," said Miss Malin with firmness. "I still want to know with whom I have passed the night."

"I will tell you much more, if it amuses you," Kasparson said, "for I have been to many continents, and I myself like to dwell in the past.

"I am an actor, Madame, as you are a Nat-og-Dag; that is, we remain so whatever else we take on, and fall back upon this one thing when the others fail us.

"But when I was a child I danced in ballet, and when I was thirteen years old I was taken up —because of being so

extraordinarily graceful, and particularly because I had to an unusual extent what in the technique of the ballet is termed *ballon*, which means the capacity for soaring, for rising above the ground and the laws of gravitation—by the great elderly noblemen of Berlin. My stepfather, the famous tenor, Herr Eunicke, introduced me to them, and believed that I was to be a gold mine to him. For five years I have known what it is to be a lovely woman, fed upon dainties, dressed in silks and a golden turban, whose caprices are law to everyone. But Herr Eunicke, like all tenors, forgot to reckon with the laws of passing time. Age stole upon us before we dreamed of it, and my career as a courtesan was a short one.

“Then I went to Spain, and became a barber. I was a barber in Seville for seven years, and I liked that, for I have always had a partiality toward soap and toilet waters, and have liked all sorts of clean and neat things. For this reason it often surprised me in the Cardinal that he did not object to dirtying his hands with his black and red inks. I became, Madame, a very good barber indeed.

“But I have also been a printer of revolutionary papers in Paris, a dog-seller in London, a slavetrader in Algiers, and the lover of a dowager principessa of Pisa. Through her I came

to travel with Professor Rosellini, and the great French orientalist Champollion, upon their Egyptian expedition. I have been to Egypt, Madame. I have stood in the great triangular shadow of the great pyramid, and from the top of it four thousand years gazed down upon me."

Miss Malin, outshone as a world traveler by the valet, quickly took refuge in the wide world of her imagination. "Ah," she said, "in Egypt, in the great triangular shadow of the great pyramid, while the ass was grazing, St. Joseph said to the Virgin: 'Oh, my sweet young dear, could you not just for a moment shut your eyes and make believe that I am the Holy Ghost?' "

Kasparson went on with his account. "I have even lived in Copenhagen," he said, "but toward the end I had but a poor time of it. I became a hostler in the night-lodgings of the fat old man called Bolle Bandeat—which means, with your permission, the cursed, or damned—where, for the fee of a penny, you could sleep on the floor, and for a halfpenny standing up, with a rope under your arms. When at last I had to flee from the hands of the law there, I changed my name to that of Kasparson, in remembrance of that proud and unfortunate boy of Nurnberg who

stabbed himself to death in order to make Lord Stanhope believe that he was the illegitimate son of Grand Duchess Stephanie of Baden.

"But if it be about my family that you want to hear, I have the honor to inform you that I am a bastard of the purest bastard blood extant. My mother was a true daughter of the people, an honest artisan's child, that lovely actress Johanna Handel-Schutz, who made all the classic ideals live upon the stage. She had a melancholy disposition nevertheless. Of my sixteen brothers and sisters, five have committed suicide. But if I tell you who was my father, that will be sure to interest you. When Johanna came to Paris, sixteen years old, to study art, she found favor in the eyes of a great lord.

"I am the son of that Duke of Orléans—who shortly after took up with the people in still another way—who insisted on being addressed as a *citoyen*, voted for the death of the King of France, and changed his name to that of Egalité. The bastard of Egalité! Can one be more bastard than that, Madame?"

"No," said the old woman, with white and stiff lips, unable to give a word of comfort to the pale man before her.

"That poor King Louis Philippe," said Kasparson, "for whom I feel sorry, and about

whom I regret having spoken so harshly tonight —he is my little brother.”

Miss Malin, even face to face with the greatest misfortunes, was never speechless for long. She said after a silence:

“Tell me now, for we may not have much time, first, why did *you* murder the Cardinal? And secondly, why did you take the trouble to deceive me, after you came here with me, and to make a fool of me on what may be the last night of my life? You were in no danger here. Did you think that I had not sufficient spirit myself, or sympathy with the dark places of the heart, to understand you?”

“Ah,” said Kasparson, “why did I not tell you? That moment, in which I killed the Cardinal, that was the mating of my soul with destiny, with eternity, with the soul of God. Do we not still impose silence at the threshold of the nuptial chamber? Or even, does the Emperor demand publicity, may not Pythagoras have a taste for decorum?”

“And why did I kill my master?” he went on. “Madame, there was little hope that both of us could be saved, and he would have sacrificed his life for mine. Should I have lived on as the servant for whom the lord had died, or should I have been simply drowned and lost, a sad adventurer?”

“I told you: I am an actor. Shall not an actor have a rôle? If all

the time the manager of the theater holds back the good rôles from us, may we not insist upon understudying the stars? The proof of our undertaking is in the success or fiasco. I have played the part well. The Cardinal would have applauded me, for he was a fine connoisseur of the art. Sir Walter Scott, Madame, took much pleasure in Wilibald Alexis's novel, *Walladmor*, which he published in his name, and which he called the most delightful mystery of the century. The Cardinal would have recognized himself in me. Quoting the great tragedy, *Axel and Walborg*, he said, slowly:

*"My honored Lord, St. Olaf comes in person, He puts me on, he drapes himself in me. I am his ghost, the larva of his spirit; The transient shell of an immortal mind...."*

"The only thing," he went on after a pause, "which he might have criticized is this: he might have held that I overdid my rôle. I stayed in this hayloft to save the lives of those sottish peasants, who preferred the salvation of their cattle to their own. It is doubtful whether the Cardinal would ever have done that, for he was a man of excellent sense. That may be so. But a little charlatanry there must needs be in all great art, and the Cardinal himself was not free from it.

"But in any case,"



he concluded, lifting his voice and his body, "at the day of judgment God shall not say to me now: 'Kasparson, you bad actor! How was it that you could not, not even with death in your own heart, play me the dying Gaul?' "

Again Miss Malin sat for a long time in the deep silence of the huge dark room.

"And why," she said at last, "did you want this rôle so much?"

"I will confide in you," said Kasparson, speaking slowly. "Not by the face shall the man be known, but by the mask. I said so at the beginning of the night.

"I am a bastard. I have upon me the bastard's curse, of which you know not. The blood of Egalité is an arrogant blood, full of vanity—difficult, difficult for you, when you have it in your veins. It claimed splendor, Madame; it will stand no equivalence; it makes you suffer greatly at the least slight.

"But these peasants and fishermen are my mother's people. Do you not think that I have wept blood over the hardness of their lives and their pale children? At the thought of their hard crusts and thin-worn breadknives, their patched clothes and patient faces, my heart is wrung. Nothing in the world have I ever loved, except them. If they would have made me their master I would have served them all my life. If

they would only have fallen down and worshiped me, I would have died for them. But they would not. That they reserved for the Cardinal. Only tonight have they come around. They have seen the face of God in my face. They will tell you, after tonight, that there was a white light over the boat in which I went out with them. Yes, even so, Madame.

"Do you know," he said, "do you know why I look to, why I cleave to, God? Why I cannot do without him? Because he is the only being toward whom I need not, I cannot, I must not, feel pity. Looking at all the other creatures of this life I am tortured, I am devoured by pity, and I am bent and crushed under the weight of their sorrows. I was sorry for the Cardinal, very sorry for that old man who had to be great and good, and who wrote a book on the Holy Ghost like a little spider hanging in the great space. But in the relation of God and me, if there is any pitying to be done, it is for him to do it. He will be sorry for me.

"Why, Madame, so it should have been with our kings. But, God help me, I feel sorry for my brother the King of France. My heart aches a little for the little man.

"Only God I shall keep, to have no mercy upon him. Let me, at least, keep God, you tender-hearted humans."

"But in that

case," said Miss Malin suddenly, "it cannot possibly mean much to you whether we are saved or not. Forgive me for saying so, Kasparson, but it will not make much difference to your fate if this house holds on until the boat comes back for us, or not."

Kasparson, at these words, laughed a little, softly and congenially. It was clear by now that he was under the influence of the peasants' keg of gin, but in this matter Miss Malin was not far behind him.

"You are right, Miss Nat-og-Dag," he said, "your sharp wits have hit the nail on the head. And so much for my fine courage. But have patience just a little longer, and I will explain the case to you.

"Few people, I said, could say of themselves that they were free of the belief that they could have made the world. Nay, go further, Madame: few people can say of themselves that they are free of the belief that this world which they see around them is in reality the work of their own imagination. Are we pleased with it, proud of it, then? Yes, at times. In the evenings, in early spring, in the company of children and of beautiful, witty women, I have been pleased with and proud of my creation. At other times, when I have been with ordinary people, I have had a very bad conscience over my

producing of such vulgar, insipid, dull stuff. I may have tried to do away with them, as the monk, in his cell, tries to drive out the degrading pictures which disturb his peace of mind and his pride in being a servant of the Lord. Now, Madame, I am pleased to have made this night here. I am genuinely proud of having made you, I assure you. But what about this one figure within the picture, this man Kasparson? Is he a success? Is he worth keeping? May he not be pronounced a blot in the picture? The monk may go to the extent of flagellating himself to drive out the image which offends him. My five brothers and sisters, who, of my mother's sixteen children, have committed suicide, may have felt in this way, for, as I have already said, my mother had a deep feeling and instinct for the classics, for the harmonious cosmos. They may have said: This work is in itself rather brilliant. My only failure is this one figure within it, which I will now have removed, even at a cost."

"Well," said Miss Malin after a pause, "and did you enjoy playing the rôle of the Cardinal when you had your chance at last? Did you have a pleasant time?"

"As God liveth, Madame, I had that," said Kasparson, "a good night and day. For I have lived long enough, by now, to have learned, when the devil grins at me, to grin

back. And what now if this—to grin back when the devil grins at you—be in reality the highest, the only true fun in all the world? And what if everything else, which people have named fun, be only a presentiment, a foreshadowing, of it? It is an art worth learning, then.”

“And I too, I too,” said Miss Malin in a voice which, although it was subdued, was rich and shrill, and which seemed to rise in the flight of a lark. As if she wanted to accompany in person the soaring course of it, she rose straight up, with the lightness and dignity of a lady who has had, by now, enough of a pleasant entertainment, and is taking her leave. “I have grinned back at him too. It is an art worth learning.”

The actor had risen with her, her *cavalière servante*, and now stood up. She looked at him with radiant eyes.

“Kasparson, you great actor,” she said, “Bastard of Egalité, kiss me.”

“Ah, no, Madame,” said Kasparson, “I am ill; there is poison in my mouth.”

Miss Malin laughed. “A fig for that tonight,” she said. She looked, indeed, past any sort of poison. She had on her shoulders that death’s-head by which druggists label their poison bottles, an unengaging object for any man to kiss. But looking straight at the man before

her, she said slowly and with much grace: "*Fils de St. Louis, montez au ciel!*"

The actor took her in his arms, held her even in a strong embrace, and kissed her. So the proud old maid did not go unkissed into her grave.

With a majestic and graceful movement she lifted up the hem of her skirt and placed it in his hand. The silk, which had been trailing over the floor, was dripping wet. He understood that this was the reason why she had got up from her seat.

Their eyes, together, sought the floor of the loft. A dark figure, like that of a long thick snake, was lying upon the boards, and a little lower down, where the floor slanted slightly, it widened to a black pool which nearly touched the feet of the sleeping girl. The water had risen to the level of the hayloft. Indeed, as they moved, they felt the heavy boards gently rocking, floating upon the waters.

The dog suddenly sat up with a jerk. It threw its head back, its ears flattened and its nose in the air, and gave a low whine.

"Hush, Passup," said Miss Malin, who had learned its name from the fishermen.

She took one of the actor's hands in hers. "Wait a moment," she said softly, so as not to waken the sleepers. "I want to tell you. I, too, was once a young girl. I walked in the woods and looked at the birds, and I

thought: How dreadful that people shut up birds in cages. I thought: If I could so live and so serve the world that after me there should never again be any birds in cages, they should all be free—”

She stopped and looked toward the wall. Between the boards a strip of fresh deep blue was showing, against which the little lamp seemed to make a red stain. The dawn was breaking.

The old woman slowly drew her fingers out of the man’s hand, and placed one upon her lips.

“A ce moment de sa narration,” she said, “Scheherazade vit paraître le matin, et, discrète, se tut.”

<sup>1</sup> The name means “hog’s head.”

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The advertisement features a purple background. On the left is the GZ logo, which consists of a stylized purple flower-like shape with a yellow 'G' and a white 'Z' inside. To the right is a smartphone displaying the app's interface, which includes a profile picture of a woman and the text 'Danna Moderna'. Below the phone, the text reads 'Ora disponibile su Google Play Edicola'.

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