

Farewell

Honoré de Balzac

Translated by Ellen Marriage

FAREWELL

“Come, Deputy of the Centre, come along! We shall have to mend our pace if we mean to sit down to dinner when every one else does, and that’s a fact! Hurry up! Jump, Marquis! That’s it! Well done! You are bounding over the furrows just like a stag!”

These words were uttered by a sportsman seated much at his ease on the outskirts of the Foret de l’Isle-Adam; he had just finished a Havana cigar, which he had smoked while he waited for his companion, who had evidently been straying about for some time among the forest undergrowth. Four panting dogs by the speaker’s side likewise watched the progress of the personage for whose benefit the remarks were made. To make their sarcastic import fully clear, it should be added that the second sportsman was both short and stout; his ample girth indicated a truly magisterial corpulence, and in consequence his progress across the furrows was by no means easy. He was striding over a vast field of stubble; the dried corn-stalks underfoot added not a little to the difficulties of his passage, and to add to his discomforts, the genial influence of the sun that slanted into his eyes brought great drops of perspiration into his face. The uppermost thought in his mind being a strong desire to keep his balance, he lurched to and fro like a coach jolted over an atrocious road.

It was one of those September days of almost tropical heat that finishes the work of summer and ripens the grapes. Such heat forebodes a coming storm; and though as yet there were wide patches of blue between the dark rain-clouds low down on the horizon, pale golden masses were rising and scattering with ominous swiftness from west to east, and drawing a shadowy veil across the sky. The wind was still, save in the upper regions of the air, so that the weight of the atmosphere seemed to compress the steamy heat of the earth into the forest glades. The tall forest trees shut out every breath of air so completely that the little valley across which the sportsman was making his way was as hot as a furnace; the silent forest seemed parched with the fiery heat. Birds and insects were mute; the topmost twigs of the trees swayed with scarcely perceptible motion. Any one who retains some recollection of the summer of 1819 must surely compassionate the plight of the hapless supporter of the ministry who toiled and sweated over the stubble to rejoin his satirical comrade. That gentleman, as he smoked his cigar, had arrived,

by a process of calculation based on the altitude of the sun, to the conclusion that it must be about five o'clock.

"Where the devil are we?" asked the stout sportsman. He wiped his brow as he spoke, and propped himself against a tree in the field opposite his companion, feeling quite unequal to clearing the broad ditch that lay between them.

"And you ask that question of *me!*" retorted the other, laughing from his bed of tall brown grasses on the top of the bank. He flung the end of his cigar into the ditch, exclaiming, "I swear by Saint Hubert that no one shall catch me risking myself again in a country that I don't know with a magistrate, even if, like you, my dear d'Albon, he happens to be an old schoolfellow."

"Why, Philip, have you really forgotten your own language? You surely must have left your wits behind you in Siberia," said the stouter of the two, with a glance half-comic, half-pathetic at the guide-post distant about a hundred paces from them.

"I understand," replied the one addressed as Philip. He snatched up his rifle, suddenly sprang to his feet, made but one jump of it into the field, and rushed off to the guide-post. "This way, d'Albon, here you are! left about!" he shouted, gesticulating in the direction of the highroad. "*To Baillet and l'Isle-Adam!*" he went on; "so if we go along here, we shall be sure to come upon the cross-road to Cassan."

"Quite right, Colonel," said M. d'Albon, putting the cap with which he had been fanning himself back on his head.

"Then *forward!* highly respected Councillor," returned Colonel Philip, whistling to the dogs, that seemed already to obey him rather than the magistrate their owner.

"Are you aware, my lord Marquis, that two leagues yet remain before us?" inquired the malicious soldier. "That village down yonder must be Baillet."

"Great heavens!" cried the Marquis d'Albon. "Go on to Cassan by all means, if you like; but if you do, you will go alone. I prefer to wait here, storm or no storm; you can send a horse for me from the chateau. You have been making game of me, Sucy. We were to have a nice day's sport by ourselves; we were not to go very far from Cassan, and go over ground that I knew. Pooh! instead of a day's fun, you have kept me running like a greyhound since four o'clock this morning, and

nothing but a cup or two of milk by way of breakfast. Oh! if ever you find yourself in a court of law, I will take care that the day goes against you if you were in the right a hundred times over.”

The dejected sportsman sat himself down on one of the stumps at the foot of the guide-post, disencumbered himself of his rifle and empty game-bag, and heaved a prolonged sigh.

“Oh, France, behold thy Deputies!” laughed Colonel de Sucey. “Poor old d’Albon; if you had spent six months at the other end of Siberia as I did . . .”

He broke off, and his eyes sought the sky, as if the story of his troubles was a secret between himself and God.

“Come, march!” he added. “If you once sit down, it is all over with you.”

“I can’t help it, Philip! It is such an old habit in a magistrate! I am dead beat, upon my honor. If I had only bagged one hare though!”

Two men more different are seldom seen together. The civilian, a man of forty-two, seemed scarcely more than thirty; while the soldier, at thirty years of age, looked to be forty at the least. Both wore the red rosette that proclaimed them to be officers of the Legion of Honor. A few locks of hair, mingled white and black, like a magpie’s wing, had strayed from beneath the Colonel’s cap; while thick, fair curls clustered about the magistrate’s temples. The Colonel was tall, spare, dried up, but muscular; the lines in his pale face told a tale of vehement passions or of terrible sorrows; but his comrade’s jolly countenance beamed with health, and would have done credit to an Epicurean. Both men were deeply sunburnt. Their high gaiters of brown leather carried souvenirs of every ditch and swamp that they crossed that day.

“Come, come,” cried M. de Sucey, “forward! One short hour’s march, and we shall be at Cassan with a good dinner before us.”

“You never were in love, that is positive,” returned the Councillor, with a comically piteous expression. “You are as inexorable as Article 304 of the Penal Code!”

Philip de Sucey shuddered violently. Deep lines appeared in his broad forehead, his face was overcast like the sky above them; but though his features seemed to contract with the pain of an intolerably bitter memory, no tears came to

his eyes. Like all men of strong character, he possessed the power of forcing his emotions down into some inner depth, and, perhaps, like many reserved natures, he shrank from laying bare a wound too deep for any words of human speech, and winced at the thought of ridicule from those who do not care to understand. M. d'Albon was one of those who are keenly sensitive by nature to the distress of others, who feel at once the pain they have unwillingly given by some blunder. He respected his friend's mood, rose to his feet, forgot his weariness, and followed in silence, thoroughly annoyed with himself for having touched on a wound that seemed not yet healed.

"Some day I will tell you my story," Philip said at last, wringing his friend's hand, while he acknowledged his dumb repentance with a heart-rending glance. "To-day I cannot."

They walked on in silence. As the Colonel's distress passed off the Councillor's fatigue returned. Instinctively, or rather urged by weariness, his eyes explored the depths of the forest around them; he looked high and low among the trees, and gazed along the avenues, hoping to discover some dwelling where he might ask for hospitality. They reached a place where several roads met; and the Councillor, fancying that he saw a thin film of smoke rising through the trees, made a stand and looked sharply about him. He caught a glimpse of the dark green branches of some firs among the other forest trees, and finally, "A house! a house!" he shouted. No sailor could have raised a cry of "Land ahead!" more joyfully than he.

He plunged at once into undergrowth, somewhat of the thickest; and the Colonel, who had fallen into deep musings, followed him unheedingly.

"I would rather have an omelette here and home-made bread, and a chair to sit down in, than go further for a sofa, truffles, and Bordeaux wine at Cassan."

This outburst of enthusiasm on the Councillor's part was caused by the sight of the whitened wall of a house in the distance, standing out in strong contrast against the brown masses of knotted tree-trunks in the forest.

"Aha! This used to be a priory, I should say," the Marquis d'Albon cried once more, as they stood before a grim old gateway. Through the grating they could see the house itself standing in the midst of some considerable extent of park land; from the style of the architecture it appeared to have been a monastery once upon a time.

“Those knowing rascals of monks knew how to choose a site!”

This last exclamation was caused by the magistrate’s amazement at the romantic hermitage before his eyes. The house had been built on a spot half-way up the hillside on the slope below the village of Neville, which crowned the summit. A huge circle of great oak-trees, hundreds of years old, guarded the solitary place from intrusion. There appeared to be about forty acres of the park. The main building of the monastery faced the south, and stood in a space of green meadow, picturesquely intersected by several tiny clear streams, and by larger sheets of water so disposed as to have a natural effect. Shapely trees with contrasting foliage grew here and there. Grottos had been ingeniously contrived; and broad terraced walks, now in ruin, though the steps were broken and the balustrades eaten through with rust, gave to this sylvan Thebaid a certain character of its own. The art of man and the picturesqueness of nature had wrought together to produce a charming effect. Human passions surely could not cross that boundary of tall oak-trees which shut out the sounds of the outer world, and screened the fierce heat of the sun from this forest sanctuary.

“What neglect!” said M. d’Albon to himself, after the first sense of delight in the melancholy aspect of the ruins in the landscape, which seemed blighted by a curse.

It was like some haunted spot, shunned of men. The twisted ivy stems clambered everywhere, hiding everything away beneath a luxuriant green mantle. Moss and lichens, brown and gray, yellow and red, covered the trees with fantastic patches of color, grew upon the benches in the garden, overran the roof and the walls of the house. The window-sashes were weather-worn and warped with age, the balconies were dropping to pieces, the terraces in ruins. Here and there the folding shutters hung by a single hinge. The crazy doors would have given way at the first attempt to force an entrance.

Out in the orchard the neglected fruit-trees were running to wood, the rambling branches bore no fruit save the glistening mistletoe berries, and tall plants were growing in the garden walks. All this forlornness shed a charm across the picture that wrought on the spectator’s mind with an influence like that of some enchanting poem, filling his soul with dreamy fancies. A poet must have lingered there in deep and melancholy musings, marveling at the harmony of this wilderness, where decay had a certain grace of its own.

In a moment a few gleams of sunlight struggled through a rift in the clouds, and a shower of colored light fell over the wild garden. The brown tiles of the roof glowed in the light, the mosses took bright hues, strange shadows played over the grass beneath the trees; the dead autumn tints grew vivid, bright unexpected contrasts were evoked by the light, every leaf stood out sharply in the clear, thin air. Then all at once the sunlight died away, and the landscape that seemed to have spoken grew silent and gloomy again, or rather, it took gray soft tones like the tenderest hues of autumn dusk.

“It is the palace of the Sleeping Beauty,” the Councillor said to himself (he had already begun to look at the place from the point of view of an owner of property). “Whom can the place belong to, I wonder. He must be a great fool not to live on such a charming little estate!”

Just at that moment, a woman sprang out from under a walnut tree on the right-hand side of the gateway, and passed before the Councillor as noiselessly and swiftly as the shadow of a cloud. This apparition struck him dumb with amazement.

“Hallo, d’Albon, what is the matter?” asked the Colonel.

“I am rubbing my eyes to find out whether I am awake or asleep,” answered the magistrate, whose countenance was pressed against the grating in the hope of catching a second glimpse of the ghost.

“In all probability she is under that fig-tree,” he went on, indicating, for Philip’s benefit, some branches that over-topped the wall on the left-hand side of the gateway.

“She? Who?”

“Eh! how should I know?” answered M. d’Albon. “A strange-looking woman sprang up there under my very eyes just now,” he added, in a low voice; “she looked to me more like a ghost than a living being. She was so slender, light and shadowy that she might be transparent. Her face was as white as milk, her hair, her eyes, and her dress were black. She gave me a glance as she flitted by. I am not easily frightened, but that cold stony stare of hers froze the blood in my veins.”

“Was she pretty?” inquired Philip.

“I don’t know. I saw nothing but those eyes in her head.”

“The devil take dinner at Cassan!” exclaimed the Colonel; “let us stay here. I am as eager as a boy to see the inside of this queer place. The window-sashes are painted red, do you see? There is a red line round the panels of the doors and the edges of the shutters. It might be the devil’s own dwelling; perhaps he took it over when the monks went out. Now, then, let us give chase to the black and white lady; come along!” cried Philip, with forced gaiety.

He had scarcely finished speaking when the two sportsmen heard a cry as if some bird had been taken in a snare. They listened. There was a sound like the murmur of rippling water, as something forced its way through the bushes; but diligently as they lent their ears, there was no footfall on the path, the earth kept the secret of the mysterious woman’s passage, if indeed she had moved from her hiding-place.

“This is very strange!” cried Philip.

Following the wall of the path, the two friends reached before long a forest road leading to the village of Chauvry; they went along this track in the direction of the highway to Paris, and reached another large gateway. Through the railings they had a complete view of the facade of the mysterious house. From this point of view, the dilapidation was still more apparent. Huge cracks had riven the walls of the main body of the house built round three sides of a square. Evidently the place was allowed to fall to ruin; there were holes in the roof, broken slates and tiles lay about below. Fallen fruit from the orchard trees was left to rot on the ground; a cow was grazing over the bowling-green and trampling the flowers in the garden beds; a goat browsed on the green grapes and young vine-shoots on the trellis.

“It is all of a piece,” remarked the Colonel. “The neglect is in a fashion systematic.” He laid his hand on the chain of the bell-pull, but the bell had lost its clapper. The two friends heard no sound save the peculiar grating creak of the rusty spring. A little door in the wall beside the gateway, though ruinous, held good against all their efforts to force it open.

“Oho! all this is growing very interesting,” Philip said to his companion.

“If I were not a magistrate,” returned M. d’Albon, “I should think that the woman in black is a witch.”

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the cow came up to the railings and held out her warm damp nose, as if she were glad of human society.

Then a woman, if so indescribable a being could be called a woman, sprang up from the bushes, and pulled at the cord about the cow's neck. From beneath the crimson handkerchief about the woman's head, fair matted hair escaped, something as tow hangs about a spindle. She wore no kerchief at the throat. A coarse black-and-gray striped woolen petticoat, too short by several inches, left her legs bare. She might have belonged to some tribe of Redskins in Fenimore Cooper's novels; for her neck, arms, and ankles looked as if they had been painted brick-red. There was no spark of intelligence in her featureless face; her pale, bluish eyes looked out dull and expressionless from beneath the eyebrows with one or two straggling white hairs on them. Her teeth were prominent and uneven, but white as a dog's.

"Hallo, good woman," called M. de Sucey.

She came slowly up to the railing, and stared at the two sportsmen with a contorted smile painful to see.

"Where are we? What is the name of the house yonder? Whom does it belong to? Who are you? Do you come from hereabouts?"

To these questions, and to a host of others poured out in succession upon her by the two friends, she made no answer save gurgling sounds in the throat, more like animal sounds than anything uttered by a human voice.

"Don't you see that she is deaf and dumb?" said M. d'Albon.

"*Minorites!*" the peasant woman said at last.

"Ah! she is right. The house looks as though it might once have been a Minorite convent," he went on.

Again they plied the peasant woman with questions, but, like a wayward child, she colored up, fidgeted with her sabot, twisted the rope by which she held the cow that had fallen to grazing again, stared at the sportsmen, and scrutinized every article of clothing upon them; she gibbered, grunted, and clucked, but no articulate word did she utter.

"Your name?" asked Philip, fixing her with his eyes as if he were trying to bewitch the woman.

"Genevieve," she answered, with an empty laugh.

"The cow is the most intelligent creature we have seen so far," exclaimed the

magistrate. "I shall fire a shot, that ought to bring somebody out."

D'Albon had just taken up his rifle when the Colonel put out a hand to stop him, and pointed out the mysterious woman who had aroused such lively curiosity in them. She seemed to be absorbed in deep thought, as she went along a green alley some little distance away, so slowly that the friends had time to take a good look at her. She wore a threadbare black satin gown, her long hair curled thickly over her forehead, and fell like a shawl about her shoulders below her waist. Doubtless she was accustomed to the dishevelment of her locks, for she seldom put back the hair on either side of her brows; but when she did so, she shook her head with a sudden jerk that had not to be repeated to shake away the thick veil from her eyes or forehead. In everything that she did, moreover, there was a wonderful certainty in the working of the mechanism, an unerring swiftness and precision, like that of an animal, well-nigh marvelous in a woman.

The two sportsmen were amazed to see her spring up into an apple-tree and cling to a bough lightly as a bird. She snatched at the fruit, ate it, and dropped to the ground with the same supple grace that charms us in a squirrel. The elasticity of her limbs took all appearance of awkwardness or effort from her movements. She played about upon the grass, rolling in it as a young child might have done; then, on a sudden, she lay still and stretched out her feet and hands, with the languid natural grace of a kitten dozing in the sun.

There was a threatening growl of thunder far away, and at this she started up on all fours and listened, like a dog who hears a strange footstep. One result of this strange attitude was to separate her thick black hair into two masses, that fell away on either side of her face and left her shoulders bare; the two witnesses of this singular scene wondered at the whiteness of the skin that shone like a meadow daisy, and at the neck that indicated the perfection of the rest of her form.

A wailing cry broke from her; she rose to her feet, and stood upright. Every successive movement was made so lightly, so gracefully, so easily, that she seemed to be no human being, but one of Ossian's maids of the mist. She went across the grass to one of the pools of water, deftly shook off her shoe, and seemed to enjoy dipping her foot, white as marble, in the spring; doubtless it pleased her to make the circling ripples, and watch them glitter like gems. She knelt down by the brink, and played there like a child, dabbling her long tresses in the water, and flinging

them loose again to see the water drip from the ends, like a string of pearls in the sunless light.

“She is mad!” cried the Councillor.

A hoarse cry rang through the air; it came from Genevieve, and seemed to be meant for the mysterious woman. She rose to her feet in a moment, flinging back the hair from her face, and then the Colonel and d’Albon could see her features distinctly. As soon as she saw the two friends she bounded to the railings with the swiftness of a fawn.

“*Farewell!*” she said in low, musical tones, but they could not discover the least trace of feeling, the least idea in the sweet sounds that they had awaited impatiently.

M. d’Albon admired the long lashes, the thick, dark eyebrows, the dazzling fairness of skin untinged by any trace of red. Only the delicate blue veins contrasted with that uniform whiteness.

But when the Marquis turned to communicate his surprise at the sight of so strange an apparition, he saw the Colonel stretched on the grass like one dead. M. d’Albon fired his gun into the air, shouted for help, and tried to raise his friend. At the sound of the shot, the strange lady, who had stood motionless by the gate, fled away, crying out like a wounded wild creature, circling round and round in the meadow, with every sign of unspeakable terror.

M. d’Albon heard a carriage rolling along the road to l’Isle-Adam, and waved his handkerchief to implore help. The carriage immediately came towards the Minorite convent, and M. d’Albon recognized neighbors, M. and Mme. de Grandville, who hastened to alight and put their carriage at his disposal. Colonel de Sucey inhaled the salts which Mme. de Grandville happened to have with her; he opened his eyes, looked towards the mysterious figure that still fled wailing through the meadow, and a faint cry of horror broke from him; he closed his eyes again, with a dumb gesture of entreaty to his friends to take him away from this scene. M. and Mme. de Grandville begged the Councillor to make use of their carriage, adding very obligingly that they themselves would walk.

“Who can the lady be?” inquired the magistrate, looking towards the strange figure.

“People think that she comes from Moulins,” answered M. de Grandville. “She

is a Comtesse de Vandieres; she is said to be mad; but as she has only been here for two months, I cannot vouch for the truth of all this hearsay talk.”

M. d’Albon thanked M. and Mme. de Grandville, and they set out for Cassan.

“It is she!” cried Philip, coming to himself.

“She? who?” asked d’Albon.

“Stephanie. . . Ah! dead and yet living still; still alive, but her mind is gone! I thought the sight would kill me.”

The prudent magistrate, recognizing the gravity of the crisis through which his friend was passing, refrained from asking questions or exciting him further, and grew impatient of the length of the way to the chateau, for the change wrought in the Colonel’s face alarmed him. He feared lest the Countess’ terrible disease had communicated itself to Philip’s brain. When they reached the avenue at l’Isle-Adam, d’Albon sent the servant for the local doctor, so that the Colonel had scarcely been laid in bed before the surgeon was beside him.

“If Monsieur le Colonel had not been fasting, the shock must have killed him,” pronounced the leech. “He was over-tired, and that saved him,” and with a few directions as to the patient’s treatment, he went to prepare a composing draught himself. M. de Sucy was better the next morning, but the doctor had insisted on sitting up all night with him.

“I confess, Monsieur le Marquis,” the surgeon said, “that I feared for the brain. M. de Sucy has had some very violent shock; he is a man of strong passions, but, with his temperament, the first shock decides everything. He will very likely be out of danger to-morrow.”

The doctor was perfectly right. The next day the patient was allowed to see his friend.

“I want you to do something for me, dear d’Albon,” Philip said, grasping his friend’s hand. “Hasten at once to the Minorite convent, find out everything about the lady whom we saw there, and come back as soon as you can; I shall count the minutes till I see you again.”

M. d’Albon called for his horse, and galloped over to the old monastery. When he reached the gateway he found some one standing there, a tall, spare man with a kindly face, who answered in the affirmative when he was asked if he lived in the

ruined house. M. d'Albon explained his errand.

“Why, then, it must have been you, sir, who fired that unlucky shot! You all but killed my poor invalid.”

“Eh! I fired into the air!”

“If you had actually hit Madame la Comtesse, you would have done less harm to her.”

“Well, well, then, we can neither of us complain, for the sight of the Countess all but killed my friend, M. de Sucey.”

“The Baron de Sucey, is it possible?” cried the doctor, clasping his hands. “Has he been in Russia? was he in the Beresina?”

“Yes,” answered d'Albon. “He was taken prisoner by the Cossacks and sent to Siberia. He has not been back in this country a twelvemonth.”

“Come in, monsieur,” said the other, and he led the way to a drawing-room on the ground-floor. Everything in the room showed signs of capricious destruction.

Valuable china jars lay in fragments on either side of a clock beneath a glass shade, which had escaped. The silk hangings about the windows were torn to rags, while the muslin curtains were untouched.

“You see about you the havoc wrought by a charming being to whom I have dedicated my life. She is my niece; and though medical science is powerless in her case, I hope to restore her to reason, though the method which I am trying is, unluckily, only possible to the wealthy.”

Then, like all who live much alone and daily bear the burden of a heavy trouble, he fell to talk with the magistrate. This is the story that he told, set in order, and with the many digressions made by both teller and hearer omitted.

When, at nine o'clock at night, on the 28th of November 1812, Marshal Victor abandoned the heights of Studzianka, which he had held through the day, he left a thousand men behind with instructions to protect, till the last possible moment, the two pontoon bridges over the Beresina that still held good. This rear guard was to save if possible an appalling number of stragglers, so numbed with the cold, that they obstinately refused to leave the baggage-wagons. The heroism of the generous band was doomed to fail; for, unluckily, the men who poured down to the eastern bank of the Beresina found carriages, caissons, and all kinds of

property which the Army had been forced to abandon during its passage on the 27th and 28th days of November. The poor, half-frozen wretches, sunk almost to the level of brutes, finding such un hoped-for riches, bivouacked in the deserted space, laid hands on the military stores, improvised huts out of the material, lighted fires with anything that would burn, cut up the carcasses of the horses for food, tore out the linings of the carriages, wrapped themselves in them, and lay down to sleep instead of crossing the Beresina in peace under cover of night — the Beresina that even then had proved, by incredible fatality, so disastrous to the Army. Such apathy on the part of the poor fellows can only be understood by those who remember tramping across those vast deserts of snow, with nothing to quench their thirst but snow, snow for their bed, snow as far as the horizon on every side, and no food but snow, a little frozen beetroot, horseflesh, or a handful of meal.

The miserable creatures were dropping down, overcome by hunger, thirst, weariness, and sleep, when they reached the shores of the Beresina and found fuel and fire and victuals, countless wagons and tents, a whole improvised town, in short. The whole village of Studzianka had been removed piecemeal from the heights of the plain, and the very perils and miseries of this dangerous and doleful habitation smiled invitingly to the wayfarers, who beheld no prospect beyond it but the awful Russian deserts. A huge hospice, in short, was erected for twenty hours of existence. Only one thought — the thought of rest — appealed to men weary of life or rejoicing in unlooked-for comfort.

They lay right in the line of fire from the cannon of the Russian left; but to that vast mass of human creatures, a patch upon the snow, sometimes dark, sometimes breaking into flame, the indefatigable grapeshot was but one discomfort the more. For them it was only a storm, and they paid the less attention to the bolts that fell among them because there were none to strike down there save dying men, the wounded, or perhaps the dead. Stragglers came up in little bands at every moment. These walking corpses instantly separated, and wandered begging from fire to fire; and meeting, for the most part, with refusals, banded themselves together again, and took by force what they could not otherwise obtain. They were deaf to the voices of their officers prophesying death on the morrow, and spent the energy required to cross the swamp in building shelters for the night and preparing a meal that often proved fatal. The coming death no longer seemed an evil, for it gave them an hour of slumber before it

came. Hunger and thirst and cold — these were evils, but not death.

At last wood and fuel and canvas and shelters failed, and hideous brawls began between destitute late comers and the rich already in possession of a lodging. The weaker were driven away, until a few last fugitives before the Russian advance were obliged to make their bed in the snow, and lay down to rise no more.

Little by little the mass of half-dead humanity became so dense, so deaf, so torpid — or perhaps it should be said so happy — that Marshal Victor, their heroic defender against twenty thousand Russians under Wittgenstein, was actually compelled to cut his way by force through this forest of men, so as to cross the Beresina with the five thousand heroes whom he was leading to the Emperor. The miserable creatures preferred to be trampled and crushed to death rather than stir from their places, and died without a sound, smiling at the dead ashes of their fires, forgetful of France.

Not before ten o'clock that night did the Duc de Belluno reach the other side of the river. Before committing his men to the pontoon bridges that led to Zembin, he left the fate of the rearguard at Studzianka in Eble's hands, and to Eble the survivors of the calamities of the Beresina owed their lives.

About midnight, the great General, followed by a courageous officer, came out of his little hut by the bridge, and gazed at the spectacle of this camp between the bank of the Beresina and the Borizof road to Studzianka. The thunder of the Russian cannonade had ceased. Here and there faces that had nothing human about them were lighted up by countless fires that seemed to grow pale in the glare of the snowfields, and to give no light. Nearly thirty thousand wretches, belonging to every nation that Napoleon had hurled upon Russia, lay there hazarding their lives with the indifference of brute beasts.

“We have all these to save,” the General said to his subordinate. “To-morrow morning the Russians will be in Studzianka. The moment they come up we shall have to set fire to the bridge; so pluck up heart, my boy! Make your way out and up yonder through them, and tell General Fournier that he has barely time to evacuate his post and cut his way through to the bridge. As soon as you have seen him set out, follow him down, take some able-bodied men, and set fire to the tents, wagons, caissons, carriages, anything and everything, without pity, and drive these fellows on to the bridge. Compel everything that walks on two legs to take refuge on the other bank. We must set fire to the camp; it is our last resource.

If Berthier had let me burn those dead — dead wagons sooner, no lives need have been lost in the river except my poor pontooners, my fifty heroes, who saved the Army, and will be forgotten.”

The General passed his hand over his forehead and said no more. He felt that Poland would be his tomb, and foresaw that afterwards no voice would be raised to speak for the noble fellows who had plunged into the stream — into the waters of the Beresina! — to drive in the piles for the bridges. And, indeed, only one of them is living now, or, to be more accurate, starving, utterly forgotten in a country village![*] The brave officer had scarcely gone a hundred paces towards Studzianka, when General Eble roused some of his patient pontooners, and began his work of mercy by setting fire to the camp on the side nearest the bridge, so compelling the sleepers to rise and cross the Beresina. Meanwhile the young aide-de-camp, not without difficulty, reached the one wooden house yet left standing in Studzianka.

* This story can be found in *The Country Parson*.

“So the box is pretty full, is it, messmate?” he said to a man whom he found outside.

“You will be a knowing fellow if you manage to get inside,” the officer returned, without turning round or stopping his occupation of hacking at the woodwork of the house with his sabre.

“Philip, is that you?” cried the aide-de-camp, recognizing the voice of one of his friends.

“Yes. Aha! is it you, old fellow?” returned M. de Sucy, looking round at the aide-de-camp, who like himself was not more than twenty-three years old. “I fancied you were on the other side of this confounded river. Do you come to bring us sweetmeats for dessert? You will get a warm welcome,” he added, as he tore away a strip of bark from the wood and gave it to his horse by way of fodder.

“I am looking for your commandant. General Eble has sent me to tell him to file off to Zembin. You have only just time to cut your way through that mass of dead men; as soon as you get through, I am going to set fire to the place to make them move —”

“You almost make me feel warm! Your news has put me in a fever; I have two friends to bring through. Ah! but for those marmots, I should have been dead

before now, old fellow. On their account I am taking care of my horse instead of eating him. But have you a crust about you, for pity's sake? It is thirty hours since I have stowed any victuals. I have been fighting like a madman to keep up a little warmth in my body and what courage I have left."

"Poor Philip! I have nothing — not a scrap! — But is your General in there?"

"Don't attempt to go in. The barn is full of our wounded. Go up a bit higher, and you will see a sort of pig-sty to the right — that is where the General is. Good-bye, my dear fellow. If ever we meet again in a quadrille in a ballroom in Paris —"

He did not finish the sentence, for the treachery of the northeast wind that whistled about them froze Major Philip's lips, and the aide-de-camp kept moving for fear of being frost-bitten. Silence soon prevailed, scarcely broken by the groans of the wounded in the barn, or the stifled sounds made by M. de Sucy's horse crunching on the frozen bark with famished eagerness. Philip thrust his sabre into the sheath, caught at the bridle of the precious animal that he had managed to keep for so long, and drew her away from the miserable fodder that she was bolting with apparent relish.

"Come along, Bichette! come along! It lies with you now, my beauty, to save Stephanie's life. There, wait a little longer, and they will let us lie down and die, no doubt;" and Philip, wrapped in a pelisse, to which doubtless he owed his life and energies, began to run, stamping his feet on the frozen snow to keep them warm. He was scarce five hundred paces away before he saw a great fire blazing on the spot where he had left his carriage that morning with an old soldier to guard it. A dreadful misgiving seized upon him. Many a man under the influence of a powerful feeling during the Retreat summoned up energy for his friend's sake when he would not have exerted himself to save his own life; so it was with Philip. He soon neared a hollow, where he had left a carriage sheltered from the cannonade, a carriage that held a young woman, his playmate in childhood, dearer to him than any one else on earth.

Some thirty stragglers were sitting round a tremendous blaze, which they kept up with logs of wood, planks wrenched from the floors of the caissons, and wheels, and panels from carriage bodies. These had been, doubtless, among the last to join the sea of fires, huts, and human faces that filled the great furrow in the land between Studzianka and the fatal river, a restless living sea of almost imperceptibly moving figures, that sent up a smothered hum of sound blended

with frightful shrieks. It seemed that hunger and despair had driven these forlorn creatures to take forcible possession of the carriage, for the old General and his young wife, whom they had found warmly wrapped in pelisses and traveling cloaks, were now crouching on the earth beside the fire, and one of the carriage doors was broken.

As soon as the group of stragglers round the fire heard the footfall of the Major's horse, a frenzied yell of hunger went up from them. "A horse!" they cried. "A horse!"

All the voices went up as one voice.

"Back! back! Look out!" shouted two or three of them, leveling their muskets at the animal.

"I will pitch you neck and crop into your fire, you blackguards!" cried Philip, springing in front of the mare. "There are dead horses lying up yonder; go and look for them!"

"What a rum customer the officer is! — Once, twice, will you get out of the way?" returned a giant grenadier. "You won't? All right then, just as you please."

A woman's shriek rang out above the report. Luckily, none of the bullets hit Philip; but poor Bichette lay in the agony of death. Three of the men came up and put an end to her with thrusts of the bayonet.

"Cannibals! leave me the rug and my pistols," cried Philip in desperation.

"Oh! the pistols if you like; but as for the rug, there is a fellow yonder who has had nothing to wet his whistle these two days, and is shivering in his coat of cobwebs, and that's our General."

Philip looked up and saw a man with worn-out shoes and a dozen rents in his trousers; the only covering for his head was a ragged foraging cap, white with rime. He said no more after that, but snatched up his pistols.

Five of the men dragged the mare to the fire, and began to cut up the carcass as dexterously as any journeymen butchers in Paris. The scraps of meat were distributed and flung upon the coals, and the whole process was magically swift. Philip went over to the woman who had given the cry of terror when she recognized his danger, and sat down by her side. She sat motionless upon a cushion taken from the carriage, warming herself at the blaze; she said no word,

and gazed at him without a smile. He saw beside her the soldier whom he had left mounting guard over the carriage; the poor fellow had been wounded; he had been overpowered by numbers, and forced to surrender to the stragglers who had set upon him, and, like a dog who defends his master's dinner till the last moment, he had taken his share of the spoil, and had made a sort of cloak for himself out of a sheet. At that particular moment he was busy toasting a piece of horseflesh, and in his face the major saw a gleeful anticipation of the coming feast.

The Comte de Vandieres, who seemed to have grown quite childish in the last few days, sat on a cushion close to his wife, and stared into the fire. He was only just beginning to shake off his torpor under the influence of the warmth. He had been no more affected by Philip's arrival and danger than by the fight and subsequent pillaging of his traveling carriage.

At first Sucy caught the young Countess' hand in his, trying to express his affection for her, and the pain that it gave him to see her reduced like this to the last extremity of misery; but he said nothing as he sat by her side on the thawing heap of snow, he gave himself up to the pleasure of the sensation of warmth, forgetful of danger, forgetful of all things else in the world. In spite of himself his face expanded with an almost fatuous expression of satisfaction, and he waited impatiently till the scrap of horseflesh that had fallen to his soldier's share should be cooked. The smell of charred flesh stimulated his hunger. Hunger clamored within and silenced his heart, his courage, and his love. He coolly looked round on the results of the spoliation of his carriage. Not a man seated round the fire but had shared the booty, the rugs, cushions, pelisses, dresses — articles of clothing that belonged to the Count and Countess or to himself. Philip turned to see if anything worth taking was left in the berline. He saw by the light of the flames, gold, and diamonds, and silver lying scattered about; no one had cared to appropriate the least particle. There was something hideous in the silence among those human creatures round the fire; none of them spoke, none of them stirred, save to do such things as each considered necessary for his own comfort.

It was a grotesque misery. The men's faces were wrapped and disfigured with the cold, and plastered over with a layer of mud; you could see the thickness of the mask by the channel traced down their cheeks by the tears that ran from their eyes, and their long slovenly-kept beards added to the hideousness of their appearance. Some were wrapped round in women's shawls, others in horse-cloths,

dirty blankets, rags stiffened with melting hoar-frost; here and there a man wore a boot on one foot and a shoe on the other, in fact, there was not one of them but wore some ludicrously odd costume. But the men themselves with such matter for jest about them were gloomy and taciturn.

The silence was unbroken save by the crackling of the wood, the roaring of the flames, the far-off hum of the camp, and the sound of sabres hacking at the carcass of the mare. Some of the hungriest of the men were still cutting tidbits for themselves. A few miserable creatures, more weary than the others, slept outright; and if they happened to roll into the fire, no one pulled them back. With cut-and-dried logic their fellows argued that if they were not dead, a scorching ought to be sufficient warning to quit and seek out more comfortable quarters. If the poor wretch woke to find himself on fire, he was burned to death, and nobody pitied him. Here and there the men exchanged glances, as if to excuse their indifference by the carelessness of the rest; the thing happened twice under the Countess' eyes, and she uttered no sound. When all the scraps of horseflesh had been broiled upon the coals, they were devoured with a ravenous greediness that would have been disgusting in wild beasts.

“And now we have seen thirty infantrymen on one horse for the first time in our lives!” cried the grenadier who had shot the mare, the one solitary joke that sustained the Frenchmen's reputation for wit.

Before long the poor fellows huddled themselves up in their clothes, and lay down on planks of timber, on anything but the bare snow, and slept — heedless of the morrow. Major de Sucy having warmed himself and satisfied his hunger, fought in vain against the drowsiness that weighed upon his eyes. During this brief struggle he gazed at the sleeping girl who had turned her face to the fire, so that he could see her closed eyelids and part of her forehead. She was wrapped round in a furred pelisse and a coarse horseman's cloak, her head lay on a blood-stained cushion; a tall astrakhan cap tied over her head by a handkerchief knotted under the chin protected her face as much as possible from the cold, and she had tucked up her feet in the cloak. As she lay curled up in this fashion, she bore no likeness to any creature.

Was this the lowest of camp-followers? Was this the charming woman, the pride of her lover's heart, the queen of many a Parisian ballroom? Alas! even for the eyes of this most devoted friend, there was no discernible trace of womanhood

in that bundle of rags and linen, and the cold was mightier than the love in a woman's heart.

Then for the major the husband and wife came to be like two distant dots seen through the thick veil that the most irresistible kind of slumber spread over his eyes. It all seemed to be part of a dream — the leaping flames, the recumbent figures, the awful cold that lay in wait for them three paces away from the warmth of the fire that glowed for a little while. One thought that could not be stifled haunted Philip — “If I go to sleep, we shall all die; I will not sleep,” he said to himself.

He slept. After an hour's slumber M. de Sucey was awakened by a hideous uproar and the sound of an explosion. The remembrance of his duty, of the danger of his beloved, rushed upon his mind with a sudden shock. He uttered a cry like the growl of a wild beast. He and his servant stood upright above the rest. They saw a sea of fire in the darkness, and against it moving masses of human figures. Flames were devouring the huts and tents. Despairing shrieks and yelling cries reached their ears; they saw thousands upon thousands of wild and desperate faces; and through this inferno a column of soldiers was cutting its way to the bridge, between the two hedges of dead bodies.

“Our rearguard is in full retreat,” cried the major. “There is no hope left!”

“I have spared your traveling carriage, Philip,” said a friendly voice.

Sucey turned and saw the young aide-de-camp by the light of the flames.

“Oh, it is all over with us,” he answered. “They have eaten my horse. And how am I to make this sleepy general and his wife stir a step?”

“Take a brand, Philip, and threaten them.”

“Threaten the Countess? . . . ”

“Good-bye,” cried the aide-de-camp; “I have only just time to get across that unlucky river, and go I must, there is my mother in France! . . . What a night! This herd of wretches would rather lie here in the snow, and most of them would sooner be burned alive than get up. . . . It is four o'clock, Philip! In two hours the Russians will begin to move, and you will see the Beresina covered with corpses a second time, I can tell you. You haven't a horse, and you cannot carry the Countess, so come along with me,” he went on, taking his friend by the arm.

“My dear fellow, how am I to leave Stephanie?”

Major de Sucy grasped the Countess, set her on her feet, and shook her roughly; he was in despair. He compelled her to wake, and she stared at him with dull fixed eyes.

“Stephanie, we must go, or we shall die here!”

For all answer, the Countess tried to sink down again and sleep on the earth. The aide-de-camp snatched a brand from the fire and shook it in her face.

“We must save her in spite of herself,” cried Philip, and he carried her in his arms to the carriage. He came back to entreat his friend to help him, and the two young men took the old general and put him beside his wife, without knowing whether he were alive or dead. The major rolled the men over as they crouched on the earth, took away the plundered clothing, and heaped it upon the husband and wife, then he flung some of the broiled fragments of horseflesh into a corner of the carriage.

“Now, what do you mean to do?” asked the aide-de-camp.

“Drag them along!” answered Sucy.

“You are mad!”

“You are right!” exclaimed Philip, folding his arms on his breast.

Suddenly a desperate plan occurred to him.

“Look you here!” he said, grasping his sentinel by the unwounded arm. “I leave her in your care for one hour. Bear in mind that you must die sooner than let any one, no matter whom, come near the carriage!”

The major seized a handful of the lady’s diamonds, drew his sabre, and violently battered those who seemed to him to be the bravest among the sleepers. By this means he succeeded in rousing the gigantic grenadier and a couple of men whose rank and regiment were undiscoverable.

“It is all up with us!” he cried.

“Of course it is,” returned the grenadier; “but that is all one to me.”

“Very well then, if die you must, isn’t it better to sell your life for a pretty woman, and stand a chance of going back to France again?”

“I would rather go to sleep,” said one of the men, dropping down into the snow; “and if you worry me again, major, I shall stick my toasting-iron into your body.”

“What is it all about, sir?” asked the grenadier. “The man’s drunk. He is a Parisian, and likes to lie in the lap of luxury.”

“You shall have these, good fellow,” said the major, holding out a riviere of diamonds, “if you will follow me and fight like a madman. The Russians are not ten minutes away; they have horses; we will march up to the nearest battery and carry off two stout ones.”

“How about the sentinels, major?”

“One of us three —” he began; then he turned from the soldier and looked at the aide-de-camp. — “You are coming, aren’t you, Hippolyte?”

Hippolyte nodded assent.

“One of us,” the major went on, “will look after the sentry. Besides, perhaps those blessed Russians are also fast asleep.”

“All right, major; you are a good sort! But will you take me in your carriage?” asked the grenadier.

“Yes, if you don’t leave your bones up yonder. — If I come to grief, promise me, you two, that you will do everything in your power to save the Countess.”

“All right,” said the grenadier.

They set out for the Russian lines, taking the direction of the batteries that had so cruelly raked the mass of miserable creatures huddled together by the river bank. A few minutes later the hoofs of two galloping horses rang on the frozen snow, and the awakened battery fired a volley that passed over the heads of the sleepers; the hoof-beats rattled so fast on the iron ground that they sounded like the hammering in a smithy. The generous aide-de-camp had fallen; the stalwart grenadier had come off safe and sound; and Philip himself received a bayonet thrust in the shoulder while defending his friend. Notwithstanding his wound, he clung to his horse’s mane, and gripped him with his knees so tightly that the animal was held as in a vise.

“God be praised!” cried the major, when he saw his soldier still on the spot, and the carriage standing where he had left it.

“If you do the right thing by me, sir, you will get me the cross for this. We have treated them to a sword dance to a pretty tune from the rifle, eh?”

“We have done nothing yet! Let us put the horses in. Take hold of these cords.”

“They are not long enough.”

“All right, grenadier, just go and overhaul those fellows sleeping there; take their shawls, sheets, anything —”

“I say! the rascal is dead,” cried the grenadier, as he plundered the first man who came to hand. “Why, they are all dead! how queer!”

“All of them?”

“Yes, every one. It looks as though the horseflesh *a la neige* was indigestible.”

Philip shuddered at the words. The night had grown twice as cold as before.

“Great heaven! to lose her when I have saved her life a score of times already.”

He shook the Countess, “Stephanie! Stephanie!” he cried.

She opened her eyes.

“We are saved, madame!”

“Saved!” she echoed, and fell back again.

The horses were harnessed after a fashion at last. The major held his sabre in his unwounded hand, took the reins in the other, saw to his pistols, and sprang on one of the horses, while the grenadier mounted the other. The old sentinel had been pushed into the carriage, and lay across the knees of the general and the Countess; his feet were frozen. Urged on by blows from the flat of the sabre, the horses dragged the carriage at a mad gallop down to the plain, where endless difficulties awaited them. Before long it became almost impossible to advance without crushing sleeping men, women, and even children at every step, all of whom declined to stir when the grenadier awakened them. In vain M. de Sucy looked for the track that the rearguard had cut through this dense crowd of human beings; there was no more sign of their passage than the wake of a ship in the sea. The horses could only move at a foot-pace, and were stopped most frequently by soldiers, who threatened to kill them.

“Do you mean to get there?” asked the grenadier.

“Yes, if it costs every drop of blood in my body! if it costs the whole world!” the major answered.

“Forward, then! . . . You can’t have the omelette without breaking eggs.” And the grenadier of the Garde urged on the horses over the prostrate bodies, and upset the bivouacs; the blood-stained wheels ploughing that field of faces left a double furrow of dead. But in justice it should be said that he never ceased to thunder out his warning cry, “Carrion! look out!”

“Poor wretches!” exclaimed the major.

“Bah! That way, or the cold, or the cannon!” said the grenadier, goading on the horses with the point of his sword.

Then came the catastrophe, which must have happened sooner but for miraculous good fortune; the carriage was overturned, and all further progress was stopped at once.

“I expected as much!” exclaimed the imperturbable grenadier. “Oho! he is dead!” he added, looking at his comrade.

“Poor Laurent!” said the major.

“Laurent! Wasn’t he in the Fifth Chasseurs?”

“Yes.”

“My own cousin. — Pshaw! this beastly life is not so pleasant that one need be sorry for him as things go.”

But all this time the carriage lay overturned, and the horses were only released after great and irreparable loss of time. The shock had been so violent that the Countess had been awakened by it, and the subsequent commotion aroused her from her stupor. She shook off the rugs and rose.

“Where are we, Philip?” she asked in musical tones, as she looked about her.

“About five hundred paces from the bridge. We are just about to cross the Beresina. When we are on the other side, Stephanie, I will not tease you any more; I will let you go to sleep; we shall be in safety, we can go on to Wilna in peace. God grant that you may never know what your life has cost!”

“You are wounded!”

“A mere trifle.”

The hour of doom had come. The Russian cannon announced the day. The Russians were in possession of Studzianka, and thence were raking the plain with grapeshot; and by the first dim light of the dawn the major saw two columns moving and forming above the heights. Then a cry of horror went up from the crowd, and in a moment every one sprang to his feet. Each instinctively felt his danger, and all made a rush for the bridge, surging towards it like a wave.

Then the Russians came down upon them, swift as a conflagration. Men, women, children, and horses all crowded towards the river. Luckily for the major and the Countess, they were still at some distance from the bank. General Eble had just set fire to the bridge on the other side; but in spite of all the warnings given to those who rushed towards the chance of salvation, not one among them could or would draw back. The overladen bridge gave way, and not only so, the impetus of the frantic living wave towards that fatal bank was such that a dense crowd of human beings was thrust into the water as if by an avalanche. The sound of a single human cry could not be distinguished; there was a dull crash as if an enormous stone had fallen into the water — and the Beresina was covered with corpses.

The violent recoil of those in front, striving to escape this death, brought them into hideous collision with those behind them, who were pressing towards the bank, and many were suffocated and crushed. The Comte and Comtesse de Vandieres owed their lives to the carriage. The horses that had trampled and crushed so many dying men were crushed and trampled to death in their turn by the human maelstrom which eddied from the bank. Sheer physical strength saved the major and the grenadier. They killed others in self-defence. That wild sea of human faces and living bodies, surging to and fro as by one impulse, left the bank of the Beresina clear for a few moments. The multitude had hurled themselves back on the plain. Some few men sprang down from the banks of the river, not so much with any hope of reaching the opposite shore, which for them meant France, as from dread of the wastes of Siberia. For some bold spirits despair became a panoply. An officer leaped from hummock to hummock of ice, and reached the other shore; one of the soldiers scrambled over miraculously on the piles of dead bodies and drift ice. But the immense multitude left behind saw at last that the Russians would not slaughter twenty thousand unarmed men, too numb with the cold to attempt to resist them, and each awaited his fate with dreadful apathy. By this time the major and his grenadier, the old general and his wife, were left to

themselves not very far from the place where the bridge had been. All four stood dry-eyed and silent among the heaps of dead. A few able-bodied men and one or two officers, who had recovered all their energy at this crisis, gathered about them. The group was sufficiently large; there were about fifty men all told. A couple of hundred paces from them stood the wreck of the artillery bridge, which had broken down the day before; the major saw this, and "Let us make a raft!" he cried.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before the whole group hurried to the ruins of the bridge. A crowd of men began to pick up iron clamps and to hunt for planks and ropes — for all the materials for a raft, in short. A score of armed men and officers, under command of the major, stood on guard to protect the workers from any desperate attempt on the part of the multitude if they should guess their design. The longing for freedom, which inspires prisoners to accomplish impossibilities, cannot be compared with the hope which lent energy at that moment to these forlorn Frenchmen.

"The Russians are upon us! Here are the Russians!" the guard shouted to the workers.

The timbers creaked, the raft grew larger, stronger, and more substantial. Generals, colonels, and common soldiers all alike bent beneath the weight of wagon-wheels, chains, coils of rope, and planks of timber; it was a modern realization of the building of Noah's ark. The young Countess, sitting by her husband's side, looked on, regretful that she could do nothing to aide the workers, though she helped to knot the lengths of rope together.

At last the raft was finished. Forty men launched it out into the river, while ten of the soldiers held the ropes that must keep it moored to the shore. The moment that they saw their handiwork floating on the Beresina, they sprang down onto it from the bank with callous selfishness. The major, dreading the frenzy of the first rush, held back Stephanie and the general; but a shudder ran through him when he saw the landing place black with people, and men crowding down like playgoers into the pit of a theatre.

"It was I who thought of the raft, you savages!" he cried. "I have saved your lives, and you will not make room for me!"

A confused murmur was the only answer. The men at the edge took up stout

poles, trust them against the bank with all their might, so as to shove the raft out and gain an impetus at its starting upon a journey across a sea of floating ice and dead bodies towards the other shore.

“*Tonnerre de Dieu!* I will knock some of you off into the water if you don’t make room for the major and his two companions,” shouted the grenadier. He raised his sabre threateningly, delayed the departure, and made the men stand closer together, in spite of threatening yells.

“I shall fall in! . . . I shall go overboard! . . .” his fellows shouted.

“Let us start! Put off!”

The major gazed with tearless eyes at the woman he loved; an impulse of sublime resignation raised her eyes to heaven.

“To die with you!” she said.

In the situation of the folk upon the raft there was a certain comic element. They might utter hideous yells, but not one of them dared to oppose the grenadier, for they were packed together so tightly that if one man were knocked down, the whole raft might capsize. At this delicate crisis, a captain tried to rid himself of one of his neighbors; the man saw the hostile intention of his officer, collared him, and pitched him overboard. “Aha! The duck has a mind to drink. . . . Over with you! — There is room for two now!” he shouted. “Quick, major! throw your little woman over, and come! Never mind that old dotard! he will drop off to-morrow!”

“Be quick!” cried a voice, made up of a hundred voices.

“Come, major! Those fellows are making a fuss, and well they may.”

The Comte de Vandieres flung off his ragged blankets, and stood before them in his general’s uniform.

“Let us save the Count,” said Philip.

Stephanie grasped his hand tightly in hers, flung her arms about, and clasped him close in an agonized embrace.

“Farewell!” she said.

Then each knew the other’s thoughts. The Comte de Vandieres recovered his energies and presence of mind sufficiently to jump on to the raft, whither Stephanie followed him after one last look at Philip.

“Major, won’t you take my place? I do not care a straw for life; I have neither a wife, nor child, nor mother belonging to me —”

“I give them into your charge,” cried the major, indicating the Count and his wife.

“Be easy; I will take as much care of them as of the apple of my eye.”

Philip stood stock-still on the bank. The raft sped so violently towards the opposite shore that it ran aground with a violent shock to all on board. The Count, standing on the very edge, was shaken into the stream; and as he fell, a mass of ice swept by and struck off his head, and sent it flying like a ball.

“Hey! major!” shouted the grenadier.

“Farewell!” a woman’s voice called aloud.

An icy shiver ran through Philip de Sucey, and he dropped down where he stood, overcome with cold and sorrow and weariness.

“My poor niece went out of her mind,” the doctor added after a brief pause. “Ah! monsieur,” he went on, grasping M. d’Albon’s hand, “what a fearful life for a poor little thing, so young, so delicate! An unheard-of misfortune separated her from that grenadier of the Garde (Fleuriot by name), and for two years she was dragged on after the army, the laughing-stock of a rabble of outcasts. She went barefoot, I heard, ill-clad, neglected, and starved for months at a time; sometimes confined to a hospital, sometimes living like a hunted animal. God alone knows all the misery which she endured, and yet she lives. She was shut up in a madhouse in a little German town, while her relations, believing her to be dead, were dividing her property here in France.

“In 1816 the grenadier Fleuriot recognized her in an inn in Strasbourg. She had just managed to escape from captivity. Some peasants told him that the Countess had lived for a whole month in a forest, and how that they had tracked her and tried to catch her without success.

“I was at that time not many leagues from Strasbourg; and hearing the talk about the girl in the wood, I wished to verify the strange facts that had given rise to absurd stories. What was my feeling when I beheld the Countess? Fleuriot told me all that he knew of the piteous story. I took the poor fellow with my niece into Auvergne, and there I had the misfortune to lose him. He had some ascendancy

over Mme. de Vandieres. He alone succeeded in persuading her to wear clothes; and in those days her one word of human speech —*Farewell*— she seldom uttered. Fleuriot set himself to the task of awakening certain associations; but there he failed completely; he drew that one sorrowful word from her a little more frequently, that was all. But the old grenadier could amuse her, and devoted himself to playing with her, and through him I hoped; but —” here Stephanie’s uncle broke off. After a moment he went on again.

“Here she has found another creature with whom she seems to have an understanding — an idiot peasant girl, who once, in spite of her plainness and imbecility, fell in love with a mason. The mason thought of marrying her because she had a little bit of land, and for a whole year poor Genevieve was the happiest of living creatures. She dressed in her best, and danced on Sundays with Dallot; she understood love; there was room for love in her heart and brain. But Dallot thought better of it. He found another girl who had all her senses and rather more land than Genevieve, and he forsook Genevieve for her. Then the poor thing lost the little intelligence that love had developed in her; she can do nothing now but cut grass and look after the cattle. My niece and the poor girl are in some sort bound to each other by the invisible chain of their common destiny, and by their madness due to the same cause. Just come here a moment; look!” and Stephanie’s uncle led the Marquis d’Albon to the window.

There, in fact, the magistrate beheld the pretty Countess sitting on the ground at Genevieve’s knee, while the peasant girl was wholly absorbed in combing out Stephanie’s long, black hair with a huge comb. The Countess submitted herself to this, uttering low smothered cries that expressed her enjoyment of the sensation of physical comfort. A shudder ran through M. d’Albon as he saw her attitude of languid abandonment, the animal supineness that revealed an utter lack of intelligence.

“Oh! Philip, Philip!” he cried, “past troubles are as nothing. Is it quite hopeless?” he asked.

The doctor raised his eyes to heaven.

“Good-bye, monsieur,” said M. d’Albon, pressing the old man’s hand. “My friend is expecting me; you will see him here before long.”

“Then it is Stephanie herself?” cried Sucy when the Marquis had spoken the

first few words. "Ah! until now I did not feel sure!" he added. Tears filled the dark eyes that were wont to wear a stern expression.

"Yes; she is the Comtesse de Vandieres," his friend replied.

The colonel started up, and hurriedly began to dress.

"Why, Philip!" cried the horrified magistrate. "Are you going mad?"

"I am quite well now," said the colonel simply. "This news has soothed all my bitterest grief; what pain could hurt me while I think of Stephanie? I am going over to the Minorite convent, to see her and speak to her, to restore her to health again. She is free; ah, surely, surely, happiness will smile on us, or there is no Providence above. How can you think she could hear my voice, poor Stephanie, and not recover her reason?"

"She has seen you once already, and she did not recognize you," the magistrate answered gently, trying to suggest some wholesome fears to this friend, whose hopes were visibly too high.

The colonel shuddered, but he began to smile again, with a slight involuntary gesture of incredulity. Nobody ventured to oppose his plans, and a few hours later he had taken up his abode in the old priory, to be near the doctor and the Comtesse de Vandieres.

"Where is she?" he cried at once.

"Hush!" answered M. Fanjat, Stephanie's uncle. "She is sleeping. Stay; here she is."

Philip saw the poor distraught sleeper crouching on a stone bench in the sun. Her thick hair, straggling over her face, screened it from the glare and heat; her arms dropped languidly to the earth; she lay at ease as gracefully as a fawn, her feet tucked up beneath her; her bosom rose and fell with her even breathing; there was the same transparent whiteness as of porcelain in her skin and complexion that we so often admire in children's faces. Genevieve sat there motionless, holding a spray that Stephanie doubtless had brought down from the top of one of the tallest poplars; the idiot girl was waving the green branch above her, driving away the flies from her sleeping companion, and gently fanning her.

She stared at M. Fanjat and the colonel as they came up; then, like a dumb animal that recognizes its master, she slowly turned her face towards the countess,

and watched over her as before, showing not the slightest sign of intelligence or of astonishment. The air was scorching. The glittering particles of the stone bench shone like sparks of fire; the meadow sent up the quivering vapors that hover above the grass and gleam like golden dust when they catch the light, but Genevieve did not seem to feel the raging heat.

The colonel wrung M. Fanjat's hands; the tears that gathered in the soldier's eyes stole down his cheeks, and fell on the grass at Stephanie's feet.

"Sir," said her uncle, "for these two years my heart has been broken daily. Before very long you will be as I am; if you do not weep, you will not feel your anguish the less."

"You have taken care of her!" said the colonel, and jealousy no less than gratitude could be read in his eyes.

The two men understood one another. They grasped each other by the hand again, and stood motionless, gazing in admiration at the serenity that slumber had brought into the lovely face before them. Stephanie heaved a sigh from time to time, and this sigh, that had all the appearance of sensibility, made the unhappy colonel tremble with gladness.

"Alas!" M. Fanjat said gently, "do not deceive yourself, monsieur; as you see her now, she is in full possession of such reason as she has."

Those who have sat for whole hours absorbed in the delight of watching over the slumber of some tenderly-beloved one, whose waking eyes will smile for them, will doubtless understand the bliss and anguish that shook the colonel. For him this slumber was an illusion, the waking must be a kind of death, the most dreadful of all deaths.

Suddenly a kid frisked in two or three bounds towards the bench and snuffed at Stephanie. The sound awakened her; she sprang lightly to her feet without scaring away the capricious creature; but as soon as she saw Philip she fled, followed by her four-footed playmate, to a thicket of elder-trees; then she uttered a little cry like the note of a startled wild bird, the same sound that the colonel had heard once before near the grating, when the Countess appeared to M. d'Albon for the first time. At length she climbed into a laburnum-tree, ensconced herself in the feathery greenery, and peered out at the *strange man* with as much interest as the most inquisitive nightingale in the forest.

“Farewell, farewell, farewell,” she said, but the soul sent no trace of expression of feeling through the words, spoken with the careless intonation of a bird’s notes.

“She does not know me!” the colonel exclaimed in despair. “Stephanie! Here is Philip, your Philip! . . . Philip!” and the poor soldier went towards the laburnum-tree; but when he stood three paces away, the Countess eyed him almost defiantly, though there was timidity in her eyes; then at a bound she sprang from the laburnum to an acacia, and thence to a spruce-fir, swinging from bough to bough with marvelous dexterity.

“Do not follow her,” said M. Fanjat, addressing the colonel. “You would arouse a feeling of aversion in her which might become insurmountable; I will help you to make her acquaintance and to tame her. Sit down on the bench. If you pay no heed whatever to her, poor child, it will not be long before you will see her come nearer by degrees to look at you.”

“That *she* should not know me; that she should fly from me!” the colonel repeated, sitting down on a rustic bench and leaning his back against a tree that overshadowed it.

He bowed his head. The doctor remained silent. Before very long the Countess stole softly down from her high refuge in the spruce-fir, flitting like a will-o’-the-wisp; for as the wind stirred the boughs, she lent herself at times to the swaying movements of the trees. At each branch she stopped and peered at the stranger; but as she saw him sitting motionless, she at length jumped down to the grass, stood a while, and came slowly across the meadow. When she took up her position by a tree about ten paces from the bench, M. Fanjat spoke to the colonel in a low voice.

“Feel in my pocket for some lumps of sugar,” he said, “and let her see them, she will come; I willingly give up to you the pleasure of giving her sweetmeats. She is passionately fond of sugar, and by that means you will accustom her to come to you and to know you.”

“She never cared for sweet things when she was a woman,” Philip answered sadly.

When he held out the lump of sugar between his thumb and finger, and shook it, Stephanie uttered the wild note again, and sprang quickly towards him; then

she stopped short, there was a conflict between longing for the sweet morsel and instinctive fear of him; she looked at the sugar, turned her head away, and looked again like an unfortunate dog forbidden to touch some scrap of food, while his master slowly recites the greater part of the alphabet until he reaches the letter that gives permission. At length the animal appetite conquered fear; Stephanie rushed to Philip, held out a dainty brown hand to pounce upon the coveted morsel, touched her lover's fingers, snatched the piece of sugar, and vanished with it into a thicket. This painful scene was too much for the colonel; he burst into tears, and took refuge in the drawing-room.

“Then has love less courage than affection?” M. Fanjat asked him. “I have hope, Monsieur le Baron. My poor niece was once in a far more pitiable state than at present.”

“Is it possible?” cried Philip.

“She would not wear clothes,” answered the doctor.

The colonel shuddered, and his face grew pale. To the doctor's mind this pallor was an unhealthy symptom; he went over to him and felt his pulse. M. de Sucey was in a high fever; by dint of persuasion, he succeeded in putting the patient in bed, and gave him a few drops of laudanum to gain repose and sleep.

The Baron de Sucey spent nearly a week, in a constant struggle with a deadly anguish, and before long he had no tears left to shed. He was often well-nigh heartbroken; he could not grow accustomed to the sight of the Countess' madness; but he made terms for himself, as it were, in this cruel position, and sought alleviations in his pain. His heroism was boundless. He found courage to overcome Stephanie's wild shyness by choosing sweetmeats for her, and devoted all his thoughts to this, bringing these dainties, and following up the little victories that he set himself to gain over Stephanie's instincts (the last gleam of intelligence in her), until he succeeded to some extent — she grew *tamer* than ever before. Every morning the colonel went into the park; and if, after a long search for the Countess, he could not discover the tree in which she was rocking herself gently, nor the nook where she lay crouching at play with some bird, nor the roof where she had perched herself, he would whistle the well-known air *Partant pour la Syrie*, which recalled old memories of their love, and Stephanie would run towards him lightly as a fawn. She saw the colonel so often that she was no longer afraid of him; before very long she would sit on his knee with her thin, lithe arms

about him. And while thus they sat as lovers love to do, Philip doled out sweetmeats one by one to the eager Countess. When they were all finished, the fancy often took Stephanie to search through her lover's pockets with a monkey's quick instinctive dexterity, till she had assured herself that there was nothing left, and then she gazed at Philip with vacant eyes; there was no thought, no gratitude in their clear depths. Then she would play with him. She tried to take off his boots to see his foot; she tore his gloves to shreds, and put on his hat; and she would let him pass his hands through her hair, and take her in his arms, and submit passively to his passionate kisses, and at last, if he shed tears, she would gaze silently at him.

She quite understood the signal when he whistled *Partant pour la Syrie*, but he could never succeed in inducing her to pronounce her own name —*Stephanie*. Philip persevered in his heart-rending task, sustained by a hope that never left him. If on some bright autumn morning he saw her sitting quietly on a bench under a poplar tree, grown brown now as the season wore, the unhappy lover would lie at her feet and gaze into her eyes as long as she would let him gaze, hoping that some spark of intelligence might gleam from them. At times he lent himself to an illusion; he would imagine that he saw the hard, changeless light in them falter, that there was a new life and softness in them, and he would cry, "Stephanie! oh, Stephanie! you hear me, you see me, do you not?"

But for her the sound of his voice was like any other sound, the stirring of the wind in the trees, or the lowing of the cow on which she scrambled; and the colonel wrung his hands in a despair that lost none of its bitterness; nay, time and these vain efforts only added to his anguish.

One evening, under the quiet sky, in the midst of the silence and peace of the forest hermitage, M. Fanjat saw from a distance that the Baron was busy loading a pistol, and knew that the lover had given up all hope. The blood surged to the old doctor's heart; and if he overcame the dizzy sensation that seized on him, it was because he would rather see his niece live with a disordered brain than lose her for ever. He hurried to the place.

"What are you doing?" he cried.

"That is for me," the colonel answered, pointing to a loaded pistol on the bench, "and this is for her!" he added, as he rammed down the wad into the pistol that he held in his hands.

The Countess lay stretched out on the ground, playing with the balls.

“Then you do not know that last night, as she slept, she murmured ‘Philip?’” said the doctor quietly, dissembling his alarm.

“She called my name?” cried the Baron, letting his weapon fall. Stephanie picked it up, but he snatched it out of her hands, caught the other pistol from the bench, and fled.

“Poor little one!” exclaimed the doctor, rejoicing that his stratagem had succeeded so well. He held her tightly to his heart as he went on. “He would have killed you, selfish that he is! He wants you to die because he is unhappy. He cannot learn to love you for your own sake, little one! We forgive him, do we not? He is senseless; you are only mad. Never mind; God alone shall take you to Himself. We look upon you as unhappy because you no longer share our miseries, fools that we are! . . . Why, she is happy,” he said, taking her on his knee; “nothing troubles her; she lives like the birds, like the deer —”

Stephanie sprang upon a young blackbird that was hopping about, caught it with a little shriek of glee, twisted its neck, looked at the dead bird, and dropped it at the foot of a tree without giving it another thought.

The next morning at daybreak the colonel went out into the garden to look for Stephanie; hope was very strong in him. He did not see her, and whistled; and when she came, he took her arm, and for the first time they walked together along an alley beneath the trees, while the fresh morning wind shook down the dead leaves about them. The colonel sat down, and Stephanie, of her own accord, lit upon his knee. Philip trembled with gladness.

“Love!” he cried, covering her hands with passionate kisses, “I am Philip . . .”

She looked curiously at him.

“Come close,” he added, as he held her tightly. “Do you feel the beating of my heart? It has beat for you, for you only. I love you always. Philip is not dead. He is here. You are sitting on his knee. You are my Stephanie, I am your Philip.”

“Farewell!” she said, “farewell!”

The colonel shivered. He thought that some vibration of his highly wrought feeling had surely reached his beloved; that the heart-rending cry, drawn from him by hope, the utmost effort of a love that must last for ever, of passion in its

ecstasy, striving to reach the soul of the woman he loved, must awaken her.

“Oh, Stephanie! we shall be happy yet!”

A cry of satisfaction broke from her, a dim light of intelligence gleamed in her eyes.

“She knows me! . . . Stephanie! . . .”

The colonel felt his heart swell, and tears gathered under his eyelids. But all at once the Countess held up a bit of sugar for him to see; she had discovered it by searching diligently for it while he spoke. What he had mistaken for a human thought was a degree of reason required for a monkey’s mischievous trick!

Philip fainted. M. Fanjat found the Countess sitting on his prostrate body. She was nibbling her bit of sugar, giving expression to her enjoyment by little grimaces and gestures that would have been thought clever in a woman in full possession of her senses if she tried to mimic her paroquet or her cat.

“Oh, my friend!” cried Philip, when he came to himself. “This is like death every moment of the day! I love her too much! I could bear anything if only through her madness she had kept some little trace of womanhood. But, day after day, to see her like a wild animal, not even a sense of modesty left, to see her —”

“So you must have a theatrical madness, must you!” said the doctor sharply, “and your prejudices are stronger than your lover’s devotion? What, monsieur! I resign to you the sad pleasure of giving my niece her food, and the enjoyment of her playtime; I have kept for myself nothing but the most burdensome cares. I watch over her while you are asleep, I— Go, monsieur, and give up the task. Leave this dreary hermitage; I can live with my little darling; I understand her disease; I study her movements; I know her secrets. Some day you shall thank me.”

The colonel left the Minorite convent, that he was destined to see only once again. The doctor was alarmed by the effect that his words made upon his guest; his niece’s lover became as dear to him as his niece. If either of them deserved to be pitied, that one was certainly Philip; did he not bear alone the burden of an appalling sorrow?

The doctor made inquiries, and learned that the hapless colonel had retired to a country house of his near Saint-Germain. A dream had suggested to him a plan for restoring the Countess to reason, and the doctor did not know that he was

spending the rest of the autumn in carrying out a vast scheme. A small stream ran through his park, and in winter time flooded a low-lying land, something like the plain on the eastern side of the Beresina. The village of Satout, on the slope of a ridge above it, bounded the horizon of a picture of desolation, something as Studzianka lay on the heights that shut in the swamp of the Beresina. The colonel set laborers to work to make a channel to resemble the greedy river that had swallowed up the treasures of France and Napoleon's army. By the help of his memories, Philip reconstructed on his own lands the bank where General Eble had built his bridges. He drove in piles, and then set fire to them, so as to reproduce the charred and blackened balks of timber that on either side of the river told the stragglers that their retreat to France had been cut off. He had materials collected like the fragments out of which his comrades in misfortune had made the raft; his park was laid waste to complete the illusion on which his last hopes were founded. He ordered ragged uniforms and clothing for several hundred peasants. Huts and bivouacs and batteries were raised and burned down. In short, he omitted no device that could reproduce that most hideous of all scenes. He succeeded. When, in the earliest days of December, snow covered the earth with a thick white mantle, it seemed to him that he saw the Beresina itself. The mimic Russia was so startlingly real, that several of his old comrades recognized the scene of their past sufferings. M. de Sucey kept the secret of the drama to be enacted with this tragical background, but it was looked upon as a mad freak in several circles of society in Paris.

In the early days of the month of January 1820, the colonel drove over to the Forest of l'Isle-Adam in a carriage like the one in which M. and Mme. de Vandieres had driven from Moscow to Studzianka. The horses closely resembled that other pair that he had risked his life to bring from the Russian lines. He himself wore the grotesque and soiled clothes, accoutrements, and cap that he had worn on the 29th of November 1812. He had even allowed his hair and beard to grow, and neglected his appearance, that no detail might be lacking to recall the scene in all its horror.

"I guessed what you meant to do," cried M. Fanjat, when he saw the colonel dismount. "If you mean your plan to succeed, do not let her see you in that carriage. This evening I will give my niece a little laudanum, and while she sleeps, we will dress her in such clothes as she wore at Studzianka, and put her in your traveling-carriage. I will follow you in a berline."

Soon after two o'clock in the morning, the young Countess was lifted into the carriage, laid on the cushions, and wrapped in a coarse blanket. A few peasants held torches while this strange elopement was arranged.

A sudden cry rang through the silence of night, and Philip and the doctor, turning, saw Genevieve. She had come out half-dressed from the low room where she slept.

“Farewell, farewell; it is all over, farewell!” she called, crying bitterly.

“Why, Genevieve, what is it?” asked M. Fanjat.

Genevieve shook her head despairingly, raised her arm to heaven, looked at the carriage, uttered a long snarling sound, and with evident signs of profound terror, slunk in again.

“’Tis a good omen,” cried the colonel. “The girl is sorry to lose her companion. Very likely she sees that Stephanie is about to recover her reason.”

“God grant it may be so!” answered M. Fanjat, who seemed to be affected by this incident. Since insanity had interested him, he had known several cases in which a spirit of prophecy and the gift of second sight had been accorded to a disordered brain — two faculties which many travelers tell us are also found among savage tribes.

So it happened that, as the colonel had foreseen and arranged, Stephanie traveled across the mimic Beresina about nine o'clock in the morning, and was awakened by an explosion of rockets about a hundred paces from the scene of action. It was a signal. Hundreds of peasants raised a terrible clamor, like the despairing shouts that startled the Russians when twenty thousand stragglers learned that by their own fault they were delivered over to death or to slavery.

When the Countess heard the report and the cries that followed, she sprang out of the carriage, and rushed in frenzied anguish over the snow-covered plain; she saw the burned bivouacs and the fatal raft about to be launched on a frozen Beresina. She saw Major Philip brandishing his sabre among the crowd. The cry that broke from Mme. de Vandieres made the blood run cold in the veins of all who heard it. She stood face to face with the colonel, who watched her with a beating heart. At first she stared blankly at the strange scene about her, then she reflected. For an instant, brief as a lightning flash, there was the same quick gaze and total lack of comprehension that we see in the bright eyes of a bird; then she

passed her hand across her forehead with the intelligent expression of a thinking being; she looked round on the memories that had taken substantial form, into the past life that had been transported into her present; she turned her face to Philip — and saw him! An awed silence fell upon the crowd. The colonel breathed hard, but dared not speak; tears filled the doctor's eyes. A faint color overspread Stephanie's beautiful face, deepening slowly, till at last she glowed like a girl radiant with youth. Still the bright flush grew. Life and joy, kindled within her at the blaze of intelligence, swept through her like leaping flames. A convulsive tremor ran from her feet to her heart. But all these tokens, which flashed on the sight in a moment, gathered and gained consistence, as it were, when Stephanie's eyes gleamed with heavenly radiance, the light of a soul within. She lived, she thought! She shuddered — was it with fear? God Himself unloosed a second time the tongue that had been bound by death, and set His fire anew in the extinguished soul. The electric torrent of the human will vivified the body whence it had so long been absent.

“Stephanie!” the colonel cried.

“Oh! it is Philip!” said the poor Countess.

She fled to the trembling arms held out towards her, and the embrace of the two lovers frightened those who beheld it. Stephanie burst into tears.

Suddenly the tears ceased to flow; she lay in his arms a dead weight, as if stricken by a thunderbolt, and said faintly:

“Farewell, Philip! . . . I love you. . . . farewell!”

“She is dead!” cried the colonel, unclasping his arms.

The old doctor received the lifeless body of his niece in his arms as a young man might have done; he carried her to a stack of wood and set her down. He looked at her face, and laid a feeble hand, tremulous with agitation, upon her heart — it beat no longer.

“Can it really be so?” he said, looking from the colonel, who stood there motionless, to Stephanie's face. Death had invested it with a radiant beauty, a transient aureole, the pledge, it may be, of a glorious life to come.

“Yes, she is dead.”

“Oh, but that smile!” cried Philip; “only see that smile. Is it possible?”

“She has grown cold already,” answered M. Fanjat.

M. de Sucy made a few strides to tear himself from the sight; then he stopped, and whistled the air that the mad Stephanie had understood; and when he saw that she did not rise and hasten to him, he walked away, staggering like a drunken man, still whistling, but he did not turn again.

In society General de Sucy is looked upon as very agreeable, and above all things, as very lively and amusing. Not very long ago a lady complimented him upon his good humor and equable temper.

“Ah! madame,” he answered, “I pay very dearly for my merriment in the evening if I am alone.”

“Then, you are never alone, I suppose.”

“No,” he answered, smiling.

If a keen observer of human nature could have seen the look that Sucy’s face wore at that moment, he would, without doubt, have shuddered.

“Why do you not marry?” the lady asked (she had several daughters of her own at a boarding-school). “You are wealthy; you belong to an old and noble house; you are clever; you have a future before you; everything smiles upon you.”

“Yes,” he answered; “one smile is killing me —”

On the morrow the lady heard with amazement that M. de Sucy had shot himself through the head that night.

The fashionable world discussed the extraordinary news in divers ways, and each had a theory to account for it; play, love, ambition, irregularities in private life, according to the taste of the speaker, explained the last act of the tragedy begun in 1812. Two men alone, a magistrate and an old doctor, knew that Monsieur le Comte de Sucy was one of those souls unhappy in the strength God gives to them to enable them to triumph daily in a ghastly struggle with a mysterious horror. If for a minute God withdraws His sustaining hand, they succumb.

PARIS, March 1830.

