Mor Jokai

Manasseh

Publio

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A Romance of Transylvania

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CHAPTER I.
FELLOW-TRAVELLERS.

Our story opens in an Italian railway station, in the spring of 1848. From a train that had just arrived, the passengers were hastening to secure their places in another that stood waiting for them. A guard had succeeded in crowding a party of two ladies and a gentleman into one of these itinerant prison-cells, which already contained seven occupants, before the newcomers perceived that they were being imposed upon. A vigorous protest followed. The elder of the two ladies, seizing the guard by the arm, addressed him in an angry tone, first in German, then in French.

With the calm indifference of an automaton, the uniformed official pointed to a placard against the wall. *Per dieci persone* was the inscription it bore. Ten persons, it seemed, were expected to find places here.

"But we have first-class tickets," protested the lady, producing a bit of yellow pasteboard in proof of her assertion.

The guard glanced at it with as little interest as he would have bestowed on a scarab from the tomb of the Pharaohs. Shrugging his shoulders, he merely indicated, with a wave of his hand, places where the three passengers might, perhaps, find seats,—one in this corner, a second yonder, and, if its owner would kindly transfer a greasy bundle to his lap, a third over there.

This arrangement, however, was not at all to the liking of either the ladies or their escort. The latter was altogether disinclined to accept a seat between two fat cattle-dealers, being of no meagre dimensions himself.

"We'll see about this!" he exclaimed, and left the compartment in quest of the station-master.

That dignitary was promenading the platform in military uniform, his hands behind his back. The complainant began to explain the situation to him and to demand that consideration to which his first-class ticket entitled him. But the *illustrissimo* merely opened his eyes and surveyed the gentleman in silence, much as a cuttlefish might have done if similarly addressed.

"*Partenza-a-a!*" shouted the guards, in warning.

The indignant gentleman hurried back to his compartment, only to find that, in his absence, three additional passengers had been squeezed into the crowded quarters, so that he himself now raised

the total to thirteen,—a decidedly unlucky number. The ladies were in despair, and their attendant had begun to express his mind vigorously in his native Hungarian, when he felt himself touched on the elbow from behind, and heard a voice accosting him, in the same tongue.

"My fellow-countryman, don't heat yourself. Not eloquence, but backsheesh, is needed here. While you were wasting your breath I had a guard open for me a reserved first-class compartment. It cost me but a trifle, and if you and your ladies choose to share it with me, it is at your service."

"Thank you," was the reply, "but we shall not have time to change; we had only two minutes here in all."

"Never fear," rejoined the stranger, reassuringly. "The *due minute* is a mere form with which to frighten the inexperienced. The train won't start for half an hour yet."

The two ladies were no less grateful to their deliverer than was Andromeda of old to the gallant Perseus. They gladly accepted the comfortable seats offered them, while their escort took a third, leaving the fourth for their benefactor, who lingered outside to finish his cigar. At the second ringing of the bell, he gave his half-smoked Havana to a passing porter, mounted the running-board of the moving train, and entered his compartment.

Seating himself, the young man removed his travelling-cap and revealed a broad, arched forehead, surmounted by a luxuriant growth of hair. Thick eyebrows, bright blue eyes, and a Greek nose were the striking characteristics of his face, which seemed to combine the peculiarities of so many types and races, that an observer would have been at a loss to classify it.

The other gentleman of the party was of genuine Hungarian stock, stout in figure and ruddy of countenance, with a pointed moustache, which he constantly twirled. The younger of the two ladies was veiled, so that only the graceful outlines of a face, evidently classic in its modelling, were revealed to the eye. But the elder had thrown back her veil, exposing to full view an honest, round face, blond hair, lively eyes, and lips that manifestly found it irksome to maintain that silence which good breeding imposes in the presence of a stranger.

The ladies' escort was a very uneasy travelling companion. First he complained that he could not sit with his back toward the engine, as he was sure to be car-sick. The young stranger accordingly changed places with him. Then he found fault with his new seat, because it was exposed to a draught which blew the cinders into his eyes. Thereupon the young man promptly volunteered to close the window for him; but this only made matters worse, for fresh air was indispensable. At this, the blond lady gave up her place to the gentleman, and he, at last, appeared satisfied. Not so, however, the lady herself; she was now seated opposite the stranger, to whom she and her companions were so greatly indebted, and the feeling of indebtedness is always somewhat irksome.

Women on a journey are inclined to regard a stranger's approach with some suspicion, and to be ever on the alert against adventurers. A vague mistrust of this sort concerning the young stranger may have been aroused by the mere fact that, Hungarian though his language indicated him to be, he and the ladies' escort indulged in no interchange of courtesies so natural among fellow-countrymen meeting by chance in a foreign land. Nevertheless the blond lady strove to assume an air that, on her part, should signify an entire absence of interest in all things relating to her *vis-à-vis*. Even when the sun shone in her face and annoyed her, she seemed determined to adjust the window-shade without any help from the stranger, until he courteously prevailed on her to accept his aid.

"Oh, what helpless creatures we women are!" she exclaimed as she sank back into her seat.

"You have yourselves to blame for it," was the other's rejoinder.

If he had simply offered some vapid compliment, protesting, for example, that women were by no means helpless creatures, but, on the contrary, the rulers of the stronger sex, and so of the world,—then she would have merely smiled sarcastically and relapsed into silence; but there was something like a challenge in his unexpected retort.

"*Par exemple?*" she rejoined, with an involuntary show of interest.

"For example," he continued, "a lady voluntarily surrenders the comfortable seat assigned to her, and exchanges with a man who occupies an uncomfortable one."

The lady coloured slightly. "A free initiative," said she, "is seldom possible with a woman. She is ever subject to a stronger will."

"Yet she need not be," was the reply; "with the fascination which she exerts over men she is in reality the stronger."

"Ah, yes; but suppose that fascination is employed over a man by women that have no right thus to use their power?"

"Then the legitimate possessor of that right is still at fault. If fascination is the bond by which the man can be held, why does she not make use of it herself? A face of statuesque beauty that knows not how to smile has often been the cause of untold unhappiness."

At these words the younger of the two ladies threw back her veil, perhaps to gain a better view of the speaker, and thus revealed just such a face as the young man had referred to,—a face with large blue eyes and silent lips.

"Would you, then," the elder lady continued the discussion with some warmth, "have a wife employ the wiles of a coquette toward her own husband, in order to retain his love?"

"I see no reason why she should not if circumstances demand it."

"Very good. But you must admit that a wife is something more than a sweetheart; maternal duties and cares also enter into her life, and when, by reason of her exalted mission as a mother, anxieties and fears will, in spite of her, depict themselves on her face, what then becomes of your pretty theory?"

The attack was becoming too warm for the young stranger, and he hastened to capitulate with a good grace. "In that case, madam," he admitted, "the husband is bound to show his wife nothing but the purest devotion and affection. The Roman lictors were, by the consul's orders, required to lower their fasces before a Roman matron; she was undisputed mistress in her sphere. The man who refuses to render the humblest of homage to the mother of his children deserves to have a millstone hung about his neck and to be cast into the sea."

The blond lady seemed softened by this unconditional surrender. "Are you on your way to Rome, may I ask?" she presently inquired, her question being apparently suggested by the other's reference to ancient Roman customs.

"Yes, that is my destination," he replied.

"You go to witness the splendid ceremonies of Holy Week, I infer."

"No; they do not interest me."

"What!" exclaimed the lady; "the sublimest of our Church observances, that which symbolises the very divinity of our Saviour, does not interest you?"

"No; because I do not believe in his divinity," was the calm reply.

The lady raised her eyebrows in involuntary token of surprise at this most unexpected answer. She suddenly felt a strong desire to fathom the mysterious stranger. "I believe the Vatican is seeking an unusually large loan just now," she remarked, half-interrogatively.

The stranger could not suppress a smile. He read the other's surmise that he might be of Hebrew birth and faith. "It is not the papal loan, madam," he returned, "that takes me to Rome; it is a divorce case."

"A divorce case?" The blond lady could not disguise her interest at these words, while even the statuesque beauty at the other end of the compartment turned her face fully upon the speaker, and her lips parted slightly, like the petals of an opening rosebud.

"Yes," resumed the young man, "a separation from one who has denied and rejected me for the sake of another; one whom I must for ever shun in the future, and yet cannot cease to love; one whose loss can never be made good to me. I am going to Rome because it is a dead city and belongs equally to all and to none."

The train halted at a station, and the young man alighted. After a few words to the guard he disappeared from sight.

"Do you know that gentleman?" asked the blond lady of her escort.

"Very well," was the reply.

"And yet you two hardly exchanged a word."

"Because we were neither of us so disposed."

"Are you enemies?"

"Not enemies, and yet in a certain sense opponents."

"Is he a Jew or an atheist?"

"Neither; he is a Unitarian."

"And what is a Unitarian, pray tell me?"

"The Unitarians form one of the recognised religious sects of Hungary," explained the man. "They are Christians who believe in the unity of God."

"It is strange I never heard of them before," said the lady.

"They live chiefly in Transylvania," added the other; "but the great body of them, taken the world over, are found in England and America, where they possess considerable influence. Their numbers are not large, but they hold together well; and, though they are not increasing rapidly, they are not losing ground."

The younger lady lowered her veil again and crossed herself beneath its folds; but her companion turned and looked out of the window with a curious desire to scrutinise the wicked heretic more closely. Both the ladies, as the reader will have conjectured, were strictly orthodox in their faith.

The train soon started again, after the customary ringing and whistling and the guards' repeated warning of "*partenza!*" But the young heretic seemed to put as little faith in bells and whistles and verbal warnings as in the dogma of the Trinity; for he failed to appear as the train moved away from the station. The ladies who owed so much to his kindness could not deny a certain feeling of relief at being freed from the company of one who cherished such heterodox religious convictions.

"You say you are well acquainted with the young man?" the blond lady resumed.

"Yes, I know him well enough," was the answer. "His name is Manasseh Adorjan, he is of good old Szekler descent, and he has seven brothers and a twin sister. They all live at home in their ancestral castle. Some of the brothers have married, but all live together peacefully under one roof and form one household. Manasseh seems to have been recognised by the family as the gifted one,—his brothers are nothing more than honest and intelligent Szeklers,—and for his education and advancement in the world all worked in unison. When he was only twenty years old this young genius became a candidate for the council. In Transylvania it is the custom to make the higher government appointments from all four of the recognised religious sects,—Roman Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, and Unitarian. From that time dates our mutual hostility."

"Then you are enemies, after all."

"In politics, yes. However, I must not bore you ladies with political questions. Suffice it to say, then, in regard to Manasseh Adorjan, that a sudden change of government policy, and the defeat of his party, gave the young man a fall from his proud eminence and led him to turn his back, for a time at least, on his native land; for he scorned to seek the preferment that was so easily within his reach by renouncing his principles and joining the opposite party."

"Now I understand," interposed the blond lady, "what he meant by his 'divorce case,' and his parting with one who had denied and rejected him, but whom he could never cease to love. Those were his words, and they referred to his country."

"Yes, probably," assented the other; "for the young man is unmarried."

At the next station the subject of this conversation suddenly reappeared.

"Ah, we thought you were lost," exclaimed the elder of the two ladies, with a not unfriendly smile.

"Oh, no, not lost," returned Manasseh; "what belongs nowhere and to no one cannot be lost. I merely took a seat on the imperial. Come, friend Gabriel,"—turning to the ladies' escort,—"will you not join me there? The view is really fine, and we can smoke also."

The one thus familiarly addressed, and whose name was Gabriel Zimandy, accepted the invitation after a moment's demur. The ladies were left to themselves.

CHAPTER II.
A LIFE'S HAPPINESS AT STAKE.

"A splendid country this!" exclaimed Gabriel Zimandy, when he had lighted his meerschaum and found himself at leisure to survey the landscape. "Too bad the Austrians have their grip on it!"

"Look here," interposed Manasseh, "suppose we steer clear of politics. Do you agree?"

"Did I say anything about politics?" retorted Gabriel. "I merely alluded to the beautiful view. Well, then, we'll talk about beautiful women if you prefer. You little know what a tender spot you touched upon with the ladies. I refer to the brunette—not to the blond, with whom you were talking."

"Ah, is the other a brunette? I did not get a good look at her."

"But she got a good look at you, while you were discussing the duties of women toward their husbands, the subject of divorce, and Heaven knows what else besides."

"And did I awaken any unpleasant reminiscences?" asked the young man.

"Not in the bosom of your fair antagonist,—she is already a widow,—but in that of her companion, who sat silent and listened to all you said. She is on her way to Rome to petition the Pope to annul her marriage."

"Is that so!" exclaimed Manasseh, in surprise. "I should have said she was just out of a convent where she had been placed to be educated."

"What eyes you have! Even without looking at her you have guessed her age to a month, I'll warrant! She is my client, the unfortunate Princess Cagliari, *née* Countess Blanka Zboroy. You know the family: their estates are entailed, so that all but the eldest son have to shift for themselves as best they can. The younger sons go into the army or the Church, and the daughters are wedded to rich husbands, or else they take the veil. But it so happened that once upon a time a rich bishop belonging to this family made a will directing that his property be allowed to accumulate until it became large enough to provide a snug fortune of a million florins for each of his relatives; and this end was recently realised. But by the terms of the will, the heirs are allowed only the usufruct of this legacy, and, furthermore, even that is to be forfeited under certain circumstances, as for example, if allegiance be refused to the reigning dynasty, or if the legatee renounce the Roman Catholic faith, or, in the case of a woman, lead an unchaste life. Any part of the estate thus forfeited goes to the remaining legatees in an equal division, and so you can imagine what a sharp watch the several beneficiaries under this will keep over one another. A million is no bagatelle; the game is worth the candle. But to come back to our starting-point, Countess Blanka was joined in marriage with Prince Cagliari as soon as she left the convent. You must know the prince, at least by reputation; he plays no small part in the political world."

"I have met him several times," replied Manasseh.

"At court balls in Vienna, doubtless," said the advocate; "for, old as Cagliari is, he still turns night into day and burns the candle at both ends. When he married Countess Blanka he was very intimate with the Marchioness Caldariva, formerly known to lovers of the ballet as 'the beautiful Cyrene.' She practised the terpsichorean art with such success that one day she danced into favour with an Italian marquis who honoured her with the gift of his name and rank, after which he shot himself. The marchioness now owns a splendid palace in Vienna, a present from Prince Cagliari, who, they say, forgot to deliver up the key to her when he married Countess Blanka. It is even whispered that the marchioness herself tied the bridegroom's cravat for him on his wedding-day. Well, however that may be, the prince took the young lady to wife, much as a rich man buys a horse of rare breed, or a costly statue, or any other high-priced curiosity. But the poor bride could not endure her husband's

presence. She was only a child, and, up to the day of her marriage, had no conception of the real meaning of matrimony. The prince has never enjoyed a moment's happiness with his young wife. His very first attempt to offer her a husband's caresses caused her to turn deadly pale and go into convulsions; and this occurred as often as the two were left alone. The prince complained of his hard lot, and sought medical advice. It was reported that the young wife was subject to epileptic attacks. A man of any delicacy would have accepted the situation and held his peace; but the prince took counsel of his factotum, a certain Benjamin Vajdar——"

An involuntary movement, and a half-suppressed exclamation on Manasseh's part, made the speaker turn to him inquiringly; then, as the other said nothing, he resumed:

"This factotum is the evil genius of the family, and the two together make a pair hard to match. The prince has obstinacy, sensuality, arrogance, and vindictiveness; and his tool has brains, cunning, and inventiveness, for the effective exercise of the other's evil tendencies. Cagliari finally went back to the beautiful Cyrene for consolation; but she was bent on proving her power over him, and at her bidding he heaped all sorts of indignities upon his innocent and helpless wife. At last, to crown all, he instituted divorce proceedings against her. This was the price he paid to regain the fair Cyrene's favour, but I am convinced that Benjamin Vajdar is at the bottom of it all. The prince bases his suit for a separation on his wife's alleged epileptic attacks and consequent unfitness for the wedded state. Of course that is all nonsense. I am not an epileptic, nor wont to bite or scratch people; but I can't approach this Cagliari without experiencing a sort of foaming at the mouth and a twitching of the muscles, as if I must pitch into the man, tooth and nail. My view of the case is that my client finds her husband's attentions so abhorrent that she even swoons when he offers to kiss her; and so I am going to apply for a total dissolution of the marriage, for if the other side win their case the papal edict will forbid a second marriage on the wife's part. And just imagine a young girl like her, in the first bloom of youth, scarcely twenty years old, compelled to renounce all hope of wedded happiness. We are now on our way to Rome to see whether my fair client's personal appeal may not avail somewhat with her judges. They cannot but take pity on her if their hearts are human. Prince Cagliari has of late lost favour at the Vatican, and all the conditions are in our favour; but there is one man whom I fear,—that cool and crafty Vajdar. I fell in with him in Venice, and asked him whither he was going. 'To Milan,' said he, but I knew he lied. He, too, is bound for Rome, and he will be there ahead of us, or at least overtake us. If we could only reach Rome first, I am confident we should win the game. But I fear he may be on this very train. Why, how warm you look! The perspiration stands in drops on your forehead. Does my pipe annoy you? No? Well, as I was saying, I suspect the fellow is on this train with us, and if he falls into my hands I'll wring his miserable neck! He thinks he's going to ruin the young life of my client and bury her alive, does he? We'll see about that."

"He shall not do it!" exclaimed the other, with emphasis.

"Good for you, my friend! And if you can propose some scheme for balking him, I'll take my hat off to you. Tell me, now, how can the princess make sure of outwitting her foes, and so escape the horrible fate of being buried alive?"

"She can turn Protestant, and then the Church of Rome will have no claim whatever on her."

"Very good, but how about the million florins left her as a good Catholic by the bishop?"

Manasseh Adorjan crumbled his cigar in his fingers. "If the princess has a woman's heart in her bosom," he declared, "she will throw her million away in return for the love of a true man."

CHAPTER III.

AN INTRUDER EXPELLED.

Meanwhile the train had reached another station, a junction where a halt was made for refreshments, pending the arrival of a connecting train. The advocate was hungry, and accordingly made his way to the dining-room, being first warned by his companion to use despatch, as otherwise, on returning to the ladies, he might find his compartment filled.

"And what will you do meantime?" asked Gabriel.

"I have my sketch-book with me," replied Manasseh, "and I am going to draw the view from my perch up here."

"Ah, I did not know you were an artist."

"Yes, I am an artist, and nothing more."

Upon the arrival of the connecting train and the ensuing scramble for seats, the ladies of our little party felt some anxiety lest their privacy should be rudely broken in upon by unwelcome strangers. Princess Cagliari bent forward and looked down the platform, but immediately drew back again. Too late, however; she had been seen; and a moment afterward a young man, of sleek and comely appearance, immaculately dressed, and carrying in one hand a small cane whose peculiar head betrayed the fact that it concealed a rapier, sprang lightly on the foot-board and entered the compartment.

"Ah, what an unexpected pleasure, Princess!" he exclaimed by way of greeting, lifting his hat and appropriating the corner seat opposite her.

"Pardon me," said Blanka, "but that seat is engaged. The gentleman who is with us—"

"Why, then, didn't he leave something—coat, or umbrella, or hand-bag—in proof of his claim to the seat?" interrupted the intruder. "The seat is now mine by railway usage, and I cannot deny myself the pleasure of sitting opposite you, my dear princess."

Blanka controlled her indignation as best she could, but her companion felt called upon to come to her aid with an energetic remonstrance.

"Mr. Vajdar," said she, severely, "you should know what is expected of a gentleman in his conduct toward a lady. You are well aware that the princess cannot endure your presence, nor are you ignorant of the reason."

The handsome young man drew a gilt pasteboard box from his side pocket, removed the cover, and offered the contents to the last speaker. "Madam Dormandy, you are fond of sweets. Permit me to solicit your acceptance of these caramels. They are freshly made, and are really excellent."

But Madam Dormandy turned her back disdainfully on the peace-offering and looked anxiously out of the window. "Where can Mr. Zimandy be all this time?" she murmured, impatiently.

"How long will you continue to dog my steps?" asked the princess, addressing the intruder in a voice that trembled with passion.

"Only to the grave," was the smiling reply; "there we shall separate—you to enter the gates of

paradise, where I despair of gaining admission."

"But what reason have you for wishing my ruin?"

"Because you yourself will have it so. Have I ever made any secret of my designs or of my motives?"

"Are you determined to make me leave this compartment?"

"You would gain nothing by so doing," was Vajdar's cool retort. "I could not possibly forego the pleasure of your company, in whatever way you might choose to continue your journey."

"What is your purpose in all this?" demanded Blanka.

"To make you either as happy as a man can make a woman, or as wretched as only the devil himself can render a human being."

"I defy you to do either."

"Futile defiance! The game is in my hands, and I can make you as one buried alive."

"God will never allow such an iniquity!" cried the princess.

"Ah, my dear madam, you forget that we are on our way to Rome, where there are churches by the score, but no God."

Blanka shuddered in spite of herself, and drew her shawl more closely about her, while her foe crossed one leg over the other and smiled self-complacently.

The warning cry "*partenza!*" sounded along the platform, and the ladies' escort came running in alarm from the dining-room and sought his compartment.

"Have I your seat, sir?" coolly inquired Benjamin Vajdar of the man who had so lately promised to wring his neck.

"Oh, no, certainly not," mumbled the doughty advocate, in considerable surprise and confusion, as he caught his breath and meekly looked around for a vacant place.

A lightning-flash from the blond beauty's eyes and a mocking smile from the dandy rewarded this courteous forbearance. But the mocking smile changed the next instant to a sudden expression of disquiet, if not of actual fear. Manasseh Adorjan stood in the doorway, and Blanka noted a swift interchange of glances between the young men, like the flashing of two drawn swords.

"That place is already engaged, sir," said Manasseh, quietly.

Benjamin Vajdar's face flushed quickly, and then as suddenly paled. In his eyes one could have read rage, hate, and fear, and his right hand clutched the head of his cane convulsively, as if about to draw the weapon therein concealed. But Manasseh still stood regarding him fixedly, and the intruder yielded without a word. Taking up his satchel, he left the compartment. The whole scene had occupied but a moment. What was it that gave one of these men such power over the other, like that of a lion-tamer over his charge?

Manasseh himself took the vacated seat, without offering it to the advocate, and sat looking out of the window as long as Vajdar was in sight. At length the train started, and as it soon entered on a

stretch of monotonous, waste territory, Blanka yielded to the drowsy lullaby of the smoothly rolling wheels, and fell asleep. Once or twice she half opened her eyes and was vaguely conscious that the young stranger opposite her was drawing something in the sketch-book that lay open on his knee. She pushed her veil still farther back from face and brow, hardly aware what she was doing, and again fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV.
A BIT OF STRATEGY.

A sharp whistle from the locomotive awakened the sleepers.

"Where are we now?" asked Blanka.

"Near Bologna," answered the artist, who alone had remained awake; "and there I have to leave the train, which continues on, via Imola, to Ancona."

"You leave the train? But I thought you, too, were going to Rome," said the princess, in surprise.

"So I am," was the reply, "but by another route. My luggage will go through to Ancona, and thence by diligence to Rome, while I push on over the Apennines to Pistoja and Florence. It is a harder road, but its splendid views amply repay one for an occasional climb on foot by the *vetturino's* side; and then, too, I shall reach Rome one day ahead of you, who go by way of Ancona."

Blanka listened with interest. "Couldn't we take that route also?" she asked. "What do you say to it, Maria? We could quietly leave the train at Bologna and let our trunks go on to Rome without us."

"But are the mountain passes safe?" queried Madam Dormandy, turning to Manasseh. "Is there no danger of highwaymen?"

"Bad men are to be feared everywhere," replied the young man; "but as for highway robbers, they are much more to be apprehended by those travelling with valises and trunks than by the tourist that simply carries a satchel slung over his shoulder, as I intend to do. In my student days I used to tramp over these mountains in every direction, and the brigands never molested me. Whenever I fell in with a band I used to group the men together and sketch them. Artists have nothing to fear from gentlemen of the road."

"And besides, we are two able-bodied men, and I always carry a brace of pistols—don't you?" spoke up the advocate, his professional zeal kindling at the prospect of stealing a march on the enemy.

"I carry no weapons of any kind," calmly replied the artist.

"Oh, I fear no harm from bad men," exclaimed the princess; "there is but one bad man whom we need to dread."

The others easily guessed to whom she referred; but Gabriel Zimandy was bent on making her meaning still plainer.

"He'd better not follow us into the mountains!" he cried, "for if the young rogue falls into my hands he'll wish he'd never been born. Lucky for him he took our friend's gentle hint; had he kept his

seat a moment longer there would have been serious trouble."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Madam Dormandy; "how surprised he will be when he fails to find us at Ancona and is obliged to journey on by diligence with our baggage, but without us!"

"We shall be hurrying on ahead of him over these grand old mountains," added the princess, with enthusiasm, her cheeks glowing in pleased anticipation. "And we have to thank you, Mr. Adorjan, for the suggestion." With an impulsive movement she extended her hand to the young artist, who scarcely ventured to touch her finger-tips in return.

"Very well, then," said he, "we will try the mountain road; and let us take no luggage but what we can carry in our hands. When we come to a beautiful waterfall we will sketch it, and when we chance upon a fine view we will celebrate its beauties in song."

"Yes, and people will take us for strolling minstrels," interposed the princess; "and we must drop our real names and titles. Mr. Zimandy shall be the impresario, and Madam Dormandy the prima-donna; they can pass for husband and wife. We two can be brother and sister. What is your sister's name?"

"Anna."

"Lend me her name for a little while, will you? You don't object?"

Manasseh turned strangely sober. "It would be only for your sake that I should object," he replied. "The bearer of that name is a very unfortunate girl."

So they agreed to leave the train at Bologna and take the mountain pass. It only remained to hoodwink Benjamin Vajdar, and Manasseh Adorjan promised to effect this. He alighted before the train had fairly stopped, having first directed the others to go into the waiting-room. "That young man will not stir from his seat, nor will he even look out of the window," added Manasseh, with as much confidence as if he had acquired a talisman which enabled him to control the other's actions.

As the train rolled out of the station the artist rejoined his party, with the welcome assurance that their enemy was now out of their way.

"Is there a mysterious relation of some sort between you two?" asked Blanka.

"Yes—one of fear: I tremble every time I see the man."

"You tremble?"

"Yes; I am afraid I shall kill him some day."

With that, and as if regretting that he had said so much, he hurried away to engage a carriage to take them to Vergato. During his absence the advocate explained to his client that the Unitarians have an especial horror of bloodshed. He declared that some of them shrank from taking even an animal's life and abstained entirely from the use of meat.