Mor Jokai

The Nameless Castle

Publio

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Maurus Jókai

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A Sketch

To a man who has earned such titles as "The Shakespeare of Hungary" and "The Glory of Hungarian Literature"; who published in fifty years three hundred and fifty novels, dramas, and miscellaneous works, not to mention innumerable articles for the press that owes its freedom chiefly to him, it seems incredible that there was ever a time of indecision as to what career he was best fitted to follow. The idle life of the nobility into which Maurus Jókay was born in 1825 had no attractions for a strongly intellectual boy, fired with zeal and energy that carried him easily to the head of each class in school and college; nor did he feel any attraction for the prosaic practice of law, his father's profession, to which Austria's despotism drove many a nobleman in those wretched days for Hungary. It was Pétofi, the poet, who was his dearest friend during the student-life at Pápa; idealism ever attracted him, and, by natural gravitation toward the finest minds, he chose the friendship of young men who quickly rose into eminence during the days of revolution and invasion that tried men's souls.

For a time Jókay, as he then wrote his name, was undecided whether to choose literature or art as an outlet for the idealism, imagination, and devotion that overflowed in two directions from this boy of seventeen. With some of the inherited artistic talent, which in his relative Munkacsy amounted to genius, he felt most inclined toward painting and sculpture, and finally consecrated himself to them. In his library at Budapest there now stands a small, well-executed bust of his wife in ivory; and on the walls hang several landscapes and still-life paintings, which he showed with a smile to an American visitor, who stood silent before them last winter, hoping for some inspiration of speech that would reconcile politeness with veracity and her own ideals of good art. If a "deep love for art and an ardent desire to excel" will "more than compensate for the want of method," to quote Sir Joshua Reynolds, then Jókay would have been a great painter indeed. While he never was that, his chisel and brushes have remained a recreation and delight to him always.

Apparently he was diverted from art to literature by a trifle; but in the light of later developments it is simple enough to see which was really the greater force working within. The Academy of Arts and Sciences, founded by Szécheni, offered a prize for the best drama, and Jókay won it. He was then seventeen, for careers began early in olden times. When twenty-one his first novel, "Work Days," met with great applause; other romances quickly followed, and, as they dealt with the social and political tendencies that fanned the revolution into flame two years later, their success was instantaneous. His true representations of Hungarian life and character, his passionate love of liberty, his lofty idealism for his crushed and lethargic country, aroused a great wave of patriotism like a call to arms, and consecrated him to work with his pen for the freedom of the common people. Henceforth paint-brushes were cast aside.

Pétofi and Jókay, teeming with great ideas, quickly attracted other writers and young men of the university about them, and, each helping the other, brought about a bloodless revolution that secured, among other inestimable boons, the freedom of a censored, degraded press. And yet the only act of violence these young revolutionists committed was in entering a printing establishment and setting up with their own hands the type for Pétofi's poem, that afterward became the war-song of the national movement. At that very establishment was soon to be printed a proclamation granting twelve of their dearest wishes to the people. From this time Jókay changed the spelling of his name to Jókai, *y* being a badge of nobility hateful to disciples of the doctrine of liberty, fraternity, equality.

About this time Jókai married the Rachel of the Hungarian stage, Rosa Laborfalvy. The portrait of her that hangs in her husband's famous library shows a beautiful woman of intense sensitiveness, into whose face some of the sadness of her rôles seems to have crept. It was to her powers of impersonation and disguise that Jókai owed his life many years later, when, imprisoned and suffering in a dungeon, he was enabled to escape in her clothes to join Kossuth in the desperate fight against the allied armies of Austria and Russia. Since her death he has lived in retirement.

The bloodless revolution of 1848, which suddenly transformed Hungary into a modern state, possessing civil and religious liberty for which the young idealists led by Kossuth had labored with such passionate zeal, was not effected without antagonizing the old aristocracy, all of whose cherished institutions were suddenly swept away; or the semi-barbaric people of the peasant class, who could little appreciate the beneficent reforms. Into the awful civil war that followed, when the horrors of an Austrian-Russian invasion were added to the already desperate situation, Jókai plunged with magnificent heroism. Side by side with Kossuth, he fought with sword and pen. Those who heard him deliver an address at the Peace Congress at Brussels two years ago felt through his impassioned eloquence that the man had himself drained the bitterest dregs of war.

While Kossuth lived in exile in England and the United States, and many other compatriots escaped to Turkey and beyond, Jókai, in concealment at home, writing under an assumed name and with a price on his head, continued his work for social reform, until a universal pardon was granted by Austria and the saddened idealists once more dared show their faces in devastated Hungary.

Ripe with experience and full of splendid intellectual power, Jókai now turned his whole attention to literature. The pages of his novels glow with the warmth of the man's intensity of feeling: his pen had been touched by a living coal. He knew his country as no other man has known it; and transferred its types, its manners, its life in high degree and low, to the pages of his romances and dramas with a brilliancy and mastery of style that captivated the people, whose idol he still remains. Scenes from Turkish life—in which, next to Hungarian, he is particularly interested; historical novels, romances of pure imagination, short tales, dramatic works, essays on literature and social questions, came pouring from his surcharged brain and heart. The very virtues of his work, its intensity, and the boundless scope of its imagination, sometimes produce a lack of unity and an improbability to which the hypercritical in the West draw attention with a sense of superior wisdom; but the Hungarians themselves, who know whereof he writes, can see no faults whatever in his work. It is essentially idealistic; the true and the beautiful shine through it with radiant lustre, in sharp distinction from the scenes of famine and carnage that abound. His Turkish stories have been described as "full of blood and roses."

Of his more mature productions, the best known are: "A Magyar Nabob"; "The Fools of Love"; "The New Landlord"; "Black Diamonds"; "A Romance of the Coming Century"; "Handsome Michael"; "God is One," in which the Unitarians play an important part; "The Nameless Castle," that gives an account of the Hungarian army employed against Napoleon in 1809; "Captive Ráby," a romance of the times of Joseph II.; and "As We Grow Old," the latter being the author's own favorite and, strangely enough, the people's also. Dr. Jókai greatly deplores that what the critics call his best work should not have been given to the English-speaking people.

In 1896 Hungary celebrated the completion of his fifty years of literary labor by issuing a beautiful jubilee edition of his works, for which the people of all grades of society subscribed $100,000. Every county in the country sent him memorials in the form of albums wrought in gold and precious stones, two hundred of these souvenirs filling one side of the author's large library and reception-room. Low bookcases running around the walls are filled only with his own publications, the various editions of his three hundred and fifty books making a large library in themselves. The cabinets hold sketches and paintings sent by the artists of Hungary as a jubilee gift; there are cases containing carvings, embroidery, lace, and natural-history specimens sent him by the peasants, and orders in gold and silver, studded with jewels, with autograph letters from the kings and queens of Europe. In the midst of all this inspiring display of loving appreciation, Dr. Jókai has his desk; a pile of neatly written, even manuscript ever before him, for in his seventy-fourth year he still feels the old-time passion for work calling him to it early in the morning and holding him in its spell all the day long. A small room adjoining his library contains the books of reference he consults, a narrow bed like a soldier's, and a few window plants. It might be the room of a monk, so bare is it of what the world calls comforts. One devoted man-servant attends to Dr. Jókai's simple wants with abundant leisure to spare.

While in Budapest Dr. Jókai is seldom seen away from home, except in Parliament, where he has a seat in the Upper House, or at the theatre where his plays are regularly performed, or at the table of a few dear relatives and old-time friends. His life is exceedingly simple and well ordered.

Just a little way back on the hills that rise beyond Buda, across the Danube and overlooking wide stretches of beautiful, fertile country, stands Dr. Jókai's summer-home. His garden is a paradise. Quantities of roses climb over the unpretentious house, the paths are lined with them; gay beds of poppies and other familiar favorites in our Western gardens, but many new to American eyes, crowd the fruit that grows in delightful abundance everywhere, for Dr. Jókai tends his garden with his own hands, and his horticultural wisdom is only second to his knowledge of the Turkish wars. His apples, pears, and roses win prizes at all the shows, and his little book, "Hints on Gardening," propagates a large crop of like-minded enthusiasts year after year. Now, as ever, any knowledge he has he shares with the people. After a long life of bitter stress and labor, abundant peace has come in the latter days.

Hungary boasts four great men: Liszt, Munkacsy, Kossuth, and Jókai, who was the intimate friend of the other three.

NELTJE BLANCHAN.

NEW YORK, JUNE, 1898.

PART I
CYTHERA'S BRIGADE

CHAPTER I

A snow-storm was raging with such vigor that any one who chanced to be passing along the silent thoroughfare might well have believed himself in St. Petersburg instead of in Paris, in the Rue des Ours, a side street leading into the Avenue St. Martin. The street, never a very busy one, was now almost deserted, as was also the avenue, as it was yet too early for vehicles of various sorts to be returning from the theatre.

The street-lamps on the corners had not yet been lighted. In front of one of those old-fashioned houses which belong to a former Paris a heavy iron lantern swung, creaking in the wind, and, battling with the darkness, shed flickering rays of light on the child who,

with a faded red cotton shawl wrapped about her, was cowering in the deep doorway of the house. From time to time there would emerge from the whirling snowflakes the dark form of a man clad as a laborer. He would walk leisurely toward the doorway in which the shivering child was concealed, but would turn when he came to the circle of light cast on the snowy pavement by the swinging lantern, and retrace his steps, thus appearing and disappearing at regular intervals. Surely a singular time and place for a promenade! The clocks struck ten—the hour which found every honest dweller within the Quartier St. Martin at home. On this evening, however, two belated citizens came from somewhere, their hurrying footsteps noiseless in the deep snow, their approach announced only by the lantern carried by one of them—an article without which no respectable citizen at the beginning of the century would have ventured on the street after nightfall. One of the pedestrians was tall and broad-shouldered, with a handsome countenance, which bore the impress of an inflexible determination; a dimple indented his smoothly shaven chin. His companion, and his senior by several years, was a slender, undersized man.

When the two men came abreast of the doorway illumined by the swinging lamp, it was evident that they had arrived at their destination. They halted and prepared to enter the house.

At this moment the child crouching in the snow began to sob.

"See here!" exclaimed the taller of the two gentlemen. "Here is a little girl."

"Why, so there is!" in turn exclaimed the elder, stooping and letting the light of his lantern fall on the child's face. "What are you doing here, little one?" he asked in a kindly tone.

"I want my mama! I want my mama!" wailed the child, with a fresh burst of sobs.

"Who is your mama?" queried the younger man.

"My mama is the countess."

"And where does she live?"

"In the palace."

"Naturally! In which avenue is the palace?"

"I—don't—know."

"A true child of Paris!" in an undertone exclaimed the elder gentleman. "She knows that her mother is a countess, and that she lives in a palace; but she has never been told the name of the street in which is her home."

"How come you to be here, little countess?" inquired the younger man.

"Diana can tell you," was the reply.

"And who may Diana be?"

"Why, who else but mama's Diana?"

"Allow me to question her," here interposed the elder man. Then, to the child: "Diana is the person who helps you put on your clothes, is she not?"

"It is just the other way: she took off my clothes—just see; I have nothing on but this petticoat and this hideous shawl."

As she spoke she flung back the faded shawl and revealed how scantily she was clad.

"You poor child!" compassionately ejaculated the young man; and when he saw that her thin morocco slippers were buried in the snow, he lifted her hastily in his arms. "You are half frozen."

"But why did Diana leave you half clothed in this manner?" pursued the elder man. "Why did she undress you? Can't you tell us that much?"

"Mama slapped her this morning."

"Ah! then Diana is a servant?"

"Why, of course; what else could she be?"

"Well, she might be a goddess or a hound, you know," smilingly returned the old gentleman.

"When mama went to the opera, this evening," explained the little one, "she ordered Diana to take me to the children's ball at the marquis's. Instead, she brought me to this street, made me get out of the carriage, took off my silk ball-gown and all my pretty ornaments, and left me here in this doorway—I am sure I don't know why, for there is n't any music here."

"It is well she left this old shawl with you, else your mama would not have a little countess to tell the tale to-morrow," observed the elder man. Then, turning to his companion, he added in a lower tone: "What are we to do with her?"

"We can't leave her here; that would be inhuman," was the reply, in the same cautious tone.

"But we can't take her in; it would be a great risk."

"What is there to fear from an innocent prattler who cannot even remember her mother's name?"

"We might take her to the conciergerie," suggested the elder gentleman.

"*I* think we had better not disturb the police when they are asleep," in a significant tone responded his companion.

"That is true; but we can't take the child to our apartments. You know that we—"

"I have an idea!" suddenly interposed the young man. "This innocent child has been placed in our way by Providence; by aiding her we may accomplish more easily the task we have undertaken."

"I understand," assented the elder; "we can accomplish two good deeds at one and the same time. Allow me to go up-stairs first; while you are locking the door I will arrange matters up there so that you may bring this poor little half-frozen creature directly with you." Then, to the child: "Don't be afraid, little countess; nothing shall harm you. To-morrow morning perhaps you will remember your mama's name, or else she will send some one in search of you."

He opened the door, and ran hastily up the worn staircase.

When the young man, with the little girl in his arms, reached the door at the head of the stairs, his companion met him, and, with a meaning glance, announced that everything was ready for the reception of their small guest. They entered a dingy anteroom, which led, through heavily curved antique sliding-doors, into a vaulted saloon hung with faded tapestry.

Here the child exhibited the first signs of alarm. "Are you going to kill me?" she cried out in terror.

The old gentleman laughed merrily, and said:

"Why, surely you don't take us to be *croquemitaines* who devour little children; do you?"

"Have you got a little girl of your own?" queried the little one, suddenly.

"No, my dear," replied the old gentleman, visibly affected by the question. "I have no wife; therefore I cannot have a little girl."

"But my mama has no husband, and she 's got me," prattled the child.

"That is different, my dear. But if I have not got a little girl, I know very well what to do for one."

As he spoke he drew off the child's wet slippers and stockings, rubbed her feet with a flannel cloth, then laid her on the bed which stood in the alcove.

"Why, how warm this bed is!" cried the child; "just as if some one had been sleeping here."

The old man's face betrayed some confusion as he responded:

"Might I not have warmed it with a warming-pan?"

"But where did you get hot coals?"

"Well, well, what an inquisitive little creature it is!" muttered the old man. Then, aloud: "My dear, don't you say your prayers before going to sleep?"

"No, indeed! Mama says we shall have plenty of time for that when we grow old."

"An enlightened woman, truly! Well, I dare say, my little maid, your convictions will not prevent you from drinking a cup of egg-punch, and partaking of a bit of pasty or a small biscuit?"

At mention of these dainties the child's countenance brightened; and while she was eating the repast with evident relish, the younger man rummaged from somewhere a large, beautifully dressed doll. All thought of fear now vanished from the small guest's mind. She clasped the toy in her arms, and, having finished her light meal, began to sing a lullaby, to which she very soon fell asleep herself.

"She is sleeping soundly," whispered the elder man, softly drawing together the faded damask bed-curtains, and walking on tiptoe back to the fireplace, where his companion had fanned the fire into a fresh blaze.

"It is high time," was the low and rather impatient response. "We can't stop here much longer. Do you know what has happened to the duke?"

"Yes, I know. He has been sentenced to death. To-morrow he will be executed. What have you discovered?"

"A fox on the trail of a lion!" harshly replied the young man. "He who aroused so many hopes is, after all, nothing more than an impostor—Leon Maria Hervagault, the son of a tailor at St. Leu. The true dauphin, the son of Louis XVI., really died a natural death, after he had served a three years' apprenticeship as shoemaker under Master Simho; and in order that a later generation might not be able to secure his ashes, he was buried in quick-lime in the Chapel of St. Margarethe."

"They were not so scrupulous concerning monsieur,"[1] observed the old man, restlessly pacing the floor. "I received a letter from my agent to-day; he writes that monsieur was secretly shot at Dillingen."

[1] Count de Provence, afterward Louis XVIII.

"What! He, too? Then—"

"Hush!" cautiously interposed the elder man. "That child might not be asleep."

"And if she were awake, what could she understand?"

"True; but we must be cautious." He ceased his restless promenade, and came close to the young man's side. "Everything is at an end here," he added in a lower tone. "We must remove our treasure to a more secure hiding-place—this very night, indeed, if it be possible."

"It is possible," assented his companion. "The plan of flight was arranged two days ago. The most difficult part was to get away from this house. It is watched day and night. Chance, however, has come to our aid."

"I understand," nodded the old gentleman, glancing significantly toward the bed.

"The most serious question now is, where shall we find a secure hiding-place? Even England is not safe. The bullets of Dillingen can reach to that country! Indeed, wherever there are police no secret is safe."

"I 'll tell you something," after a moment's deliberation observed the elder man. "I know of a country in Europe where order prevails, and where there are no police spies; and, what is more, the place of which I speak is beyond the range of a gunshot!"

"I confess I am curious to learn where such a place may be found," with an incredulous smile returned the young man.

"Fetch the map, and I will point it out to you. Afterward we will arrange your route toward it." The two men spread a large map of Europe on the table, and, bending over it, were soon deeply absorbed in examining it, the while exchanging whispered remarks.

At last they seemed to have agreed on something. The map was folded up and thrust into the younger man's pocket.

"I shall start at once," he said, with an air of decision.

"That is well," with evident satisfaction assented his companion. "And take with you also the steel casket. In it are all the necessary documents, some articles of clothing on which the mother with her own hands embroidered the well-known symbol, and a million of francs in English bank-notes. These, however, you will not use unless compelled to do so by extreme necessity. You will receive annually a sufficient sum from a certain banking-house which will supply all your wants. Have our two trusty friends been apprised?"

"Yes; they await me hourly."

"So soon as you are beyond the French boundary you may communicate with me in the way we have agreed upon. Until I hear

from you I shall be in a terror of anxiety. I am sorry I cannot accompany you, but I am already suspected. You are, as yet, free from suspicion—are not yet registered in the black book!"

"You may trust my skill to evade pursuit," said the young man, producing from a secret cupboard a casket richly ornamented with gold.

"I do not doubt your skill, or your ability to accomplish the undertaking; but the task is not a suitable one for so young a man. Have you considered the fate which awaits you?"

"I have considered everything."

"You will be buried; and, what is worse, you will be the keeper of your own prison."

"I shall be a severe jailer, I promise you," with a grim smile responded the young man.

"Jester! You forget your twenty-six years! And who can tell how long you may be buried alive?"

"Have no fear for me. I do not dread the task. Those in power now will one day be overthrown."

"But when the child, who is only twelve years old now, becomes in three or four years a blooming maiden—what then? Already she is fond of you; then she will love you. You cannot hinder it; and yet, you will not even dare to dream of returning her love. Have you thought of this also?"

"I shall look upon myself as the inhabitant of a different planet," answered the young man.

"Your hand, my friend! You have undertaken a noble task—one that is greater than that of the captive knight who cut off his own foot, that his sovereign, who was chained to him, might escape—"

"Pray say no more about me," interposed his companion. "Is the child asleep?"

"This one is; the one in the other room is awake."

"Then let us go to her and tell her what we have decided." He lifted the two-branched candlestick from the table; his companion carefully closed the iron doors of the fireplace; then the two went into the adjoining chamber, leaving the room they had quitted in darkness.

The elder gentleman had made a mistake: "this" child was *not* asleep. She had listened attentively, half sitting up in bed, to as much of the conversation as she could hear.

A ray of light penetrated through the keyhole. The little girl sprang nimbly from the bed, ran to the door, and peered through the tiny aperture. Suddenly footsteps came toward the door. When it opened, however, the little eavesdropper was back underneath the covers of the bed. The old gentleman entered the room. He had no candle. He left the door open, walked noiselessly to the bed, and drew aside the curtains to see if "this" child was still asleep. The long-drawn, regular breathing convinced him. Then he took something from the chair beside the bed, and went back into the other room. The object he had taken from the chair was the faded red shawl in which the stray child had been wrapped. He did not close the door of the adjoining chamber, for the candles had been extinguished and both rooms were now dark.

To the listening child in the bed, however, it seemed as if voices were whispering near her—as if she heard a stifled sob. Then cautious footsteps crossed the floor, and after an interval of silence the street door opened and closed.

Very soon afterward a light was struck in the adjoining room, and the elder man came through the doorway—alone.

He flung back the doors of the fireplace, and stirred the embers; then he proceeded to perform a singular task. First he tossed a number of letters and papers into the flames, then several dainty articles of girls' clothing. He watched them until they had burned to ashes; then he flung himself into an arm-chair; his head sank forward on his breast, in which position he sat motionless for several hours.

CHAPTER II

When the younger of the two men stepped into the street he carried in his arms a little girl wrapped in a faded red shawl, to whom he was speaking encouragingly, in tones loud enough for any passer-by to hear:

"I know the little countess will be able to find her mama's palace; for there is a fountain in front of it in which there is a stone man with a three-pronged fork, and a stone lady with a fish-tail! Oh, yes; we shall be sure to find it; and very soon we shall be with mama."

Here the child in his arms began to sob bitterly.

"For heaven's sake, do not weep; do not let your voice be heard," whispered the young man in her ear.

At this moment a man wearing a coarse blouse, with his cap drawn over his eyes and a short pipe between his lips, came staggering toward them. The young man, in order to make room for him, pressed close to the wall, whereupon the new-comer, who seemed intoxicated, began in drunken tones:

"Hello, citizen! What do you mean? Do you want me to walk in the gutter?—because you have got on fine boots, and I have only wooden sabots! I am a citizen like yourself, and as good as you. We are alike, are n't we?"

The young man now knew with whom he had to deal—a police spy whose duty it was to watch him. He therefore replied quietly:

"No, we are not alike, citizen; for I have in my arms an unfortunate child who has strayed from its mother. Every Frenchman respects a child and misfortune. Is not that so, citizen?"

"Yes, that is so, citizen. Let 's have a little conversation about it"; and the pretended drunkard seized hold of the young man's mantle to detain him.

"It is very cold," returned the young man. "Instead of talking here, suppose you help me get this child to its home. Go to the nearest corner and fetch a coach. I will wait here for you."

The blouse-wearer hesitated a moment, then walked toward the street-corner, managing, however, to keep an eye on the young man and his charge. At the corner he whistled in a peculiar manner, whereupon the rumbling of wheels was heard. In a few moments the leather-covered vehicle drew up beside the curb where the young man was waiting.

"I am very much obliged to you for your kindness, citizen," he said to the blouse-wearer, who had returned with the coach. "Here," pressing a twenty-sou piece into the man's palm, "is something for your trouble. I wish you would come with me to help hunt for this little girl's home. If you have time, and will come with me, you shall be paid for your trouble."

"Can't do it, citizen; my wife is expecting me at home. Just you trust this coachman; he will help you find the place. He 's a clever youth—are n't you, Peroquin? You have made many a night journey about Paris, have n't you? See that you earn your twenty francs to-night, too!"

That the coachman was also in the service of the secret police the young man knew very well; but he did not betray his knowledge by word or mien.

The blouse-wearer now shook hands cordially with the young man, and said:

"Adieu, citizen. I beg your pardon if I offended you. I 'll leave you now. I am going to my wife, or to the tavern; who can tell the future?"

He waited until the young man had entered the coach with his charge; then, instead of betaking himself to his wife or to the tavern, he crossed the street, and took up his station in the recess of a doorway opposite the house with the swinging lantern. . . .

"Where to?" asked the coachman of the young man.

"Well, citizen," was the smiling response, "if I knew that, all would be well. But that is just what I don't know; and the little countess, here, who has strayed from her home, can't remember the street, nor the number of the house, in which she lives. She can only remember that her mama's palace is on a square in which there is a fountain. We must therefore visit all the fountains in turn until we find the right one."

The coachman made no further inquiries, but climbed to the box, and drove off in quest of the fountains of Paris.

Two fountains were visited, but neither of them proved to be the right one. The young man now bade the coachman drive through a certain street to a third fountain. It was a narrow, winding street—the Rue des Blancs Manteaux.

When the coach was opposite a low, one-storied house, the young man drew the strap, and told the driver he wished to stop for a few moments. As the vehicle drew up in front of the house, the door opened, and a tall, stalwart man in top-boots came forth, accompanied by a sturdy dame who held a candle, which she protected from the wind with the palm of her hand.

"Is that you, Raoul?" called the young man from the coach window.

There was no response from the giant, who, instead, sprang nimbly to the box, and, flinging one arm around the astonished coachman, thrust a gag into his mouth. Before the captive could make a move to defend himself, his fare was out of the coach, and

had pinioned his arms behind his back. The giant and the young man now lifted the coachman from the box and carried him into the house, the woman followed with the trembling child, whom she had carefully lifted from the coach.

In the house, the two men bound their captive securely, first removing his coat. Then they seated him on the couch, and placed a mirror in front of him.

"You need not be alarmed, citizen," said the man in the top-boots. "No harm shall come to you. We are only going to copy your face—because of its beauty, you know!"

The young man also seated himself in front of the mirror, and proceeded, with various brushes and colors, to paint his cheeks and nose a copper hue, exactly like that of the coachman's reflection in the glass. Then he exchanged his own peruke and hat for the shabby ones of the coachman. Lastly, he flung around his shoulders the mantle with its seven collars, and the resemblance was complete.

"And now," observed the giant, addressing the captive, "you can rest without the least fear. At the latest, to-morrow about this time your coach, your horses, your mantle, and whatever else belongs to you will be returned. For the use of the things we have borrowed from you we shall leave in the pocket of your coat twenty francs for every hour, and an extra twenty francs as a *pourboire*; don't forget to look for it! To-morrow at eleven o'clock a girl will fetch milk; she will release you, and you can tell her what a singular dream you had! If you can't go to sleep, just repeat the multiplication table. I always do when I can't sleep, and I never have to go beyond seven times seven. Good night, citizen!"

The door of the adjoining room opened, and the woman appeared, leading by the hand a pretty little boy.

"We are ready," she announced.

The two men thrust pistols into their pockets. Then the woman and the little boy entered the coach, the two men took seats on the box, and the coach rolled away.

CHAPTER III

At ten o'clock the next morning the old gentleman paid a visit to his little guest. This time the child was really asleep, and opened her eyes only when the curtains were drawn back and the light from the window fell on her face.

"How kind of you to waken me, monsieur!" she said, smiling; she was in a good humor, as children are who have slept well. "I have slept splendidly. This bed is as good as my own at home. And how delightful not to hear my governess scolding! You never scold, do you, monsieur? I deserve to be scolded, though, for I was very naughty last night, and you were so kind to me—gave me such nice egg-punch; see, there is a glass of it left over; it will do for my breakfast. I love cold punch, so you need not trouble to bring me any chocolate." With these words, the little maid sprang nimbly from the bed, ran with the naïveté of an eight-year-old child to the table, where she settled herself in the corner of the sofa, drew her bare feet up under her, and proceeded to breakfast on the left-over punch and biscuits.

"There! that was a good breakfast," she said, after she had finished her meal. "Oh, I almost forgot. Has mama sent for me?"

"Certainly not, my dear! We are going, by and by, to look for her. The countess very likely has not yet learned of your disappearance; and if she does know that you did not return home last night, she believes you safe with the marquis. She will think you were not allowed to return home in the storm, and will not expect to see you before noon."

"You are very clever, monsieur. I should never have thought of that! I imagined that mama would be vexed, and when mama is cross she is *so* disagreeable. At other times, though, she is perfectly lovely! You will see how very beautiful she is, monsieur, for you are coming home with me to tell her how you found me—you are so very kind! How I wish you were my papa!"

The old gentleman was touched by the little one's artless prattle.

"Well, my dear little maid," he said tenderly, "we can't think of showing ourselves on the street in such a costume. Besides, it would frighten your mama to see you so. I am going out to one of the shops to buy you a frock. Tell me, what sort was it Diana took from you?"

"A lovely pink silk, trimmed with lace, with short sleeves," promptly replied the little maid.

"I shall not forget—a pink silk, trimmed with lace. You need not be afraid to stay alone here. No one will come while I am away."

"Oh, I am not the least bit afraid. I like to be alone sometimes."

"There is the doll to keep you company," suggested the old gentleman, more and more pleased with his affable little visitor.

"Is n't she lovely!" enthusiastically exclaimed the child. "She slept with me last night, and every time I woke up I kissed her."

"You shall have her for your own, if you like her so much, my dear."

"Oh, thank you! Did the doll belong to your dear little daughter who is dead?"

"Yes—yes," sorrowfully murmured the old gentleman.

"Then I will not play with her, but keep her locked in my little cupboard, and call her Philine. That was the name of my little sister who is dead. Come here, Philine, and sit by me."

"Perhaps you might like to look at a book while I am away—"

"A book!" interrupted the child, with a merry laugh, clapping her hands. "Why, I am just learning the alphabet, and can't bring myself to call a two-pronged fork 'y.'"

"You dear little innocent rogue!" tenderly ejaculated the old gentleman. "Are you fond of flowers?"

He brought from the adjoining room a porcelain flowerpot containing a narcissus in bloom.

"Oh, what a charming flower!" cried the child, admiringly. "How I wish I might pluck just one!"

"Help yourself, my dear," returned her host, pushing the plant toward her.

The child daintily broke off one of the snowy blossoms, and, with childlike coquetry, fastened it in the trimming of her chemise.

"What is this beautiful flower called, monsieur?"

"The narcissus."

At mention of the name the little maid suddenly clapped her hands and cried joyfully:

"Why, that is the name of our palace! Now don't you know where it is?"

"The 'Palace of Narcissus'? I have heard of it."

"Then you will have no trouble finding my home. Oh, you dear good little flower!" and she kissed the snowy blossom rapturously.

The old gentleman surveyed her smilingly for a few moments, then said:

"I will go now, and buy the frock."

"And while you are away I shall tell Philine the story of Gargantua," responded the child.

"Lock the door after me, my dear, and do not open it until I mention my name: Alfred Cambray—"

"Oh, I should forget the second one! Just say, 'Papa Alfred'; I can remember that."

When the child was certain that the old gentleman had left the house, she began hastily to search the room. She peered into every corner and crevice. Then she went into the adjoining chamber, and opened every drawer and cupboard. In returning to the first room she saw some scraps of paper scattered about the floor. She collected them carefully, placed them on the table, and dexterously fitted the pieces together until the entire note-sheet lay before her. It was covered with writing which had evidently been traced by a hurried hand, yet the child seemed to have no difficulty in reading it.

When she heard the old gentleman's footstep on the staircase, she brushed the scraps of paper from the table, and hastened to open the door before the signal was given; and when he exhibited his purchase she danced for joy.

"It is just like my ball-gown—exactly like it!" she exclaimed, kissing the hands of her benefactor. Then the old gentleman clothed the child as skilfully as if he were accustomed to such work. When the task was finished he looked about him, and saw the scraps of paper on the floor; he swept them together, and threw them into the fire.

Then, with the hand of his little companion clasped in his own, he descended to the street in quest of a cab to take them to the Palace of Narcissus.

The Palace of Narcissus had originally been the property of the celebrated danseuse, Mlle. Guimard, for whom it had been built by the Duke de Soubise. Like so many other fine houses, it had been confiscated by the Revolution and sold at auction—or, rather, had been disposed of by lottery, a lady who had paid one hundred and twenty francs for her ticket winning it.

The winner of the palace sold it to M. Périgaud, a banker and shrewd speculator, who divided the large dwelling into suites of apartments, which became the favorite lodgings of the young men of fashion. These young men were called the "narcissi," and later, the "incroyables" and "*petits crevés*." The building, however, retained the name of the Palace of Narcissus.

When the fiacre stopped at the door of the palace which led to her mama's apartment, the little countess alighted with her escort, and said to the coachman:

"You need not wait; the marquis will return home in my mama's carriage."

M. Cambray was obliged to submit to be called the "marquis." The harmless fib was due to the rank of the little countess; she could not have driven through the streets of Paris in the same fiacre with a *pékin!*

"We will not go up the main staircase," said the child, taking her companion's arm and leading him into the palace. "I don't want to meet any of the servants. We will go directly to mama's boudoir, and take her by surprise."

The countess mother, however, was not in her boudoir; only a screaming cockatoo, and a capuchin monkey that grimaced a welcome. Through the folding-doors which opened into an adjoining room came the melancholy tones of a harmonium; and M. Cambray recognized a favorite air—Beethoven's symphony, "*Les adieux, l'absence, et le retour*." He paused a moment to listen to it.

"That is mama playing," whispered the child. "You go in first, and tell her you have brought me home. Be very careful; mama is very nervous." M. Cambray softly opened the door, and halted, amazed, on the threshold.

The room into which he had ventured unannounced was a magnificent salon, filled with a brilliant company. Evidently the countess was holding a matinée.

The assembled company were in full toilet. The women, who were chiefly young and handsome, were clad in the modest fashion of that day, which draped the shoulders and bust with embroidered kerchiefs, with priceless lace adorning their gowns and genuine pearls twined among their tresses. The men also wore full dress: Hungarian trousers, short-waisted coat, with large, bright metal buttons, opening over an embroidered waistcoat.

Surrounded by her guests, the mistress of the house, an ideal of beauty, Cythera herself, was seated at the harpsichord, her neck and shoulders hidden by her wonderfully beautiful golden hair. When M. Cambray, in his plain brown coat buttoned to the chin, with black gloves and dull buckle-shoes, appeared in the doorway of the boudoir, which was not open to all the world, every eye was turned in surprise toward him.

The lady at the harpsichord rose, surveyed the intruder with a haughty stare, and was about to speak when a lackey in silver-embroidered livery came hastily toward her and said something in a low tone.

"What?" she ejaculated, with sudden terror. "My daughter lost?"

The guests crowded around her, and a scene of great excitement followed.

Here M. Cambray came forward and said:

"I have found your daughter, countess, and return her to you."

The lovely woman made one step toward the child, who had followed M. Cambray into the room, then sank to the floor unconscious. She was tenderly lifted and borne into the boudoir. Two physicians, who were of the company, followed.

When the door closed behind them, the entire company remaining in the salon gathered about M. Cambray. The ladies seized his hands; and while a blonde houri on his right sought to attract his attention, a brunette beauty claimed it on his left—both women ignoring the attempts of the men to shake hands with the hero of the hour.

One of the men, an elderly and distinguished-looking personage with a commanding mien, now pressed forward to introduce himself. "Monsieur, I am the Marquis Lyonel de Fervlans," he repeated in a patronizing tone.

"I am Alfred Cambray," was the simple response.

"Ah? Pray, have the kindness to tell us—the friends of the countess—what has happened?"

M. Cambray related how and where he had found the lost child, the company listening with eager attention. All were deeply

affected. Some of the women wept. When M. Cambray concluded his recital, the marquis grasped both his hands, and, pressing them warmly, said in a trembling voice:

"Thanks, many thanks, you brave, good man! We will never forget your kindness."

One of the physicians now came from the boudoir, and announced that the countess was better, and desired to speak to the deliverer of her child.

The countess was reclining on an ottoman, half buried in luxurious cushions. Her little daughter was kneeling by her side, her head resting on her mother's knee. It was a charming tableau.

"I am not able to express my gratitude, monsieur," began the countess, in a faint voice, extending both hands toward M. Cambray. "I hope you will allow me to call you my friend. I shall never cease to thank you! Amélie, my love, kiss this hand; look at this face; impress it on your heart, and never, *never* forget it, for this brave gentleman rescued you from a most horrible fate."

M. Cambray listened to these profuse expressions of gratitude, but with heedless ear. His thoughts were with the fugitives. He longed to know if they had escaped pursuit. While the countess was speaking he could not help but think that a great ado was being made because a little countess had been abandoned half clad in the public street. *He* knew of another little maid who had been treated with far greater cruelty.

His reply was brief:

"Your little daughter is very charming."

The mother sat upright with sudden decision, and unfastened the ivory locket from the black ribbon around her neck. It contained a portrait of the little countess Amélie.