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"It is quite, quite impossible to let out another inch; she must have a new skirt, Miss Pincham."

My mother knelt on the floor of our little sitting-room. The green cloth had been removed from our table, which was strewn with scissors, cotton, tape and snips. On a square piece of dragged, put down by our landlady, Mrs. Lipscombe, to save the carpet, I stood, undergoing the agonies of being "trod on."

I was wondering whether it could be in any way connected with a letter which mother had received a day or two previously—a letter which I had seen her take out and read several times since. I had not seen her answer it yet—mother so seldom wrote a letter that I should have been certain to notice it. Altogether was puzzled. The letter, I believed, concerned me in some ways else, why this new frock?

Poor, darling mother! As she rose from the floor and arranged her widow's cap at the glass, I thought how sweet was her pale, tired face. To me it was all so natural, our monotonous life together at Shipley-le-Marsh, that I never knew what she suffered.

Mother was the eldest daughter of Matthew Carewe, a mill-owner, rolling in money. He bought Gray Ashtead, a beautiful estate some fifteen miles from Shipley, and added to it every modern luxury that wealth could supply. His family consisted of two daughters—Emmeline and Rosalie. Emmeline was beautiful, with that fragile loveliness which so soon decays. A complexion like a conch shell, clear-cut features, hair of pale gold, and soft blue eyes. On her he centered all his ambition. "Who married Emmeline, married her name," said he. She must be Duchess of Gray Ashtead, she must be properly in the line of Caroline. At the age of eighteen he did meet, at Harrogate, a French nobleman, Constant Damien by name. He was a member of a most ancient and noble house, dispossessed of title and estates by the revolution of 1789. He was supremely handsome, of course, penniless.

When Emmeline confessed to marry Constant no grandfather almost had a fit. With any reasonable language he dismissed the idea altogether, terming his would-be sonnin-law a "beggarly adventurer." Beside himself with rage, Constant told him that it was a condescension on his part to stoop to the daughter of a parvenu—one who certainly did not derive her beauty and goodness from her father, but inherited them straight from the angels, for Mr. Carewe should know "that it was not for such canaille as he to insult a nobleman of France with impunity."

So the two separated, and next morning Emmeline ran away with young Damien. They went to London and were married. My grandfather expected them to appear in a few weeks, sueing for forgiveness and help. He much mistook the nature of Constant Damien. The young man, who was by profession an artist, worked night and day to keep his girl wife from want. He would have died a thousand deaths sooner than apply to Matthew Carewe for a pin. For a year the foolish couple were very, very happy. Success began to smile on Constant; people took him up. I was born, and their bliss seemed perfect. Then the shadow fell. Constant, walking home one day in the rain, took a chill. He neglected his cold—neglected the hollow cough which followed it—continued to go out in all weathers, and at last, one day, took to his bed. He was in a rapid decline, nothing could save him, and in a year he was dead, and beautiful Emmeline was a widow—just twenty years old.

Then indeed, she wrote to her father, but too late. He would have nothing whatever to say to her. He could rather forgive nor forget. His darling, proud daughter had dealt him a blow from which he could not rally. He desired his solicitor to write to her and tell her that £100 a year, which she inherited from her mother, would be paid regularly. That was all.

The deserting young widow next wrote to Constant's mother, who had married a second time a Devonshire gentleman named Burnside. The answer from her was that she could have no communication with any member of a family which had insulted her Constant; Mrs. Damien's own grand relations might look after her and her baby. By the next post came a kind, bluff letter from Mr. Burnside, my grandmother's English husband, inclosing a ten-pound note, and promising to send more when I should be old enough to need education. But before that time came he was dead. Poor mother was indeed friendless. She came to Shipley-le-Marsh, and settled there, for two reasons. First, it was within the reach of her sister Rosalie; secondly, it was a place where nobody knew her.

For some years mother was always hoping that her father would relent; but when I was about four years old, Mr. Carewe adopted the son of his cousin—a boy about three years older than I. Then mother felt that our chance was gone. This adopting of a son and heir was a final blow. Day by day she fived on her quiet, dreary life, meek and crushed, hoping and expecting nothing.

All dinnertime that day mother was silent and preoccupied. The kind attention and grave smile with which she usually met my childish chatter were not mine today. Once I almost thought I saw her crying, but it might have been fancy.

Mariane Lipscombe had hardly finished clearing away the dishes when, from my post at the open window, I announced, triumphantly, "Here's Aunt Rosalie!" The elegant barouche, with its spirited chestnuts, drew up at our humble door. Aunt Rosalie bustled into the room full of life and spirit. She was twenty-six years old and a very striking-looking woman. She embraced mother warmly, and then turned with me on her lap.

"Well, Tadpole," quoth she, "when's your body going to grow as large as your head?"

In answer to this inquiry I burrowed my indeed head in her shoulder and giggled.

"Long and lanky! What a gawky child she's growing, Emmeline! I don't know how you keep her in frocks."

"It is difficult," said mother, sitting near, and watching with a smile of pleasure as I dived into a basket of Gray Ashtead strawberries. "And that reminds me, Rosalie, I have been waiting most eagerly for your visit today, to consult you about something. I had a letter the other day from Mrs. Burnside."

"Mrs. ——?" queried my aunt, puzzled.

"Mrs. Burnside—my mother-in-law—old Madame Damien, that was."

"Oh, to be sure! What did she say?"

"She wants to make Olga's acquaintance. She wants me to send her down to Burnside for a long visit, and I—I have decided to let her go."

"Emmeline! All that distance!"

"Here is the letter; read it for yourself."

Aunt Rosalie took the missive, in its cramped, angular, French handwriting, which seemed to belong to another century.

"Burnside, June 3.

"My Dear Madame Damien—You will, without doubt, experience a great surprise in receiving a letter from me after my long silence; but it is written in deference to the wish of my late husband, Mr. Burnside. In his lifetime he expressed a desire to be at the expense of educating the daughter of my Constant, whose memory he ever held as dear as that of a son. According to my calculations, your daughter must be ten years of age by this, and be grown a great girl. I would ask, let her come to Burnside and pay me a long visit. Let me ascertain her character, her mental capacity, her tastes, and her temper. I shall then be able to judge how best to carry out the wishes of Mr. Burnside. I trust that no foolish pride will induce you to stand in the way of your child's interests in this matter. Send me a letter, indicating the day and hour of her arrival, and she shall be met.

"Hoping for a favorable reply, I am, madame, yours very faithfully,

"BLANCHE MARIE NICOLINE BURNSIDE."

"I think the old lady's rather uppish," was my aunt's comment on reading this epistle.

"Truly look on the matter rationally, it is," said mother, pleadingly; "what other prospects have I for her? You yourself must by this time despair of papa's ever coming round. If darling Olga had only been a boy it might have been different—but now! His adopting young Raycraham Carewe has been my final blow.

"You see," continued mother, with a hopeless sigh, "my only hopes for the poor child must come through Mrs. Burnside. She must have a little money, I should think, and when she dies she might leave it to Olga."

"But I don't want to leave you: I won't go anywhere," I cried, and therewith I burst into tears.

But the fiat had gone forth. Mother and aunt set about to comfort me; but nothing could change mother's determination. I was to go and make my grandmother's acquaintance.

CHAPTER II.

I will pass over the sad parting with my mother and the few incidents of my journey to Kingsden, where I was to be met by some of my grandmother's folks. When the train reached my destination I scrambled up, the guard appeared, flung open the door and deposited me and my portmanteau on the platform.

A heavy step crunched on the gravel near me. I looked up. A very tall, and, as it seemed to me then, fabulously broad man stood over me. A rough, gray-cloth hat covered tangled yellow hair, blue Saxon eyes looked down from under squarely marked brows, the lower part of the face was hidden in thick blonde beard and mustache.

"Miss Damien?" said he, in grave, deep tones.

"Yes, I am Olga Damien," I answered, looking up at him with a frenchorous quiver of my mouth, which warned me that tears were not far off.

Hercules lifted me up a tremendous height into an airy "trap." I liked being there. It was not so pleasant when Hercules climbed in beside me, carefully arranging a dust cloth over my knees, and easily gathering up the reins. We started off for our five-mile drive. Suddenly we took a sharp turn to the right, through a gate which stood open, over a bridge under which a stream murmured, and, behold, the house fronted me! An old, low, long Elizabethan pile, gray, stone-built, and beautiful. We stopped at the front door! It was open, which struck me then, I remember, as odd. I was set on my feet by Hercules, who then strode to the wide door at the foot of the staircase, and called aloud, "Madame! I have brought her!"

A moment elapsed, during which, spite of June sunset, cold shivers ran down my back. Then a door opened, and through it came my grandmother, with hands outstretched. Ah! She was like an old picture—like a lady from another century. What a grandmother for me to possess! As she stood smiling, and never speaking, but holding out her hands to me, I held back no longer. I ran straight into the shelter of her arms, let her pull my hat off my tumbled locks, and felt her caressing touch as she held my head against her breast and murmured over me, in the softest voice imaginable,

"My dear granddaughter! My poor Constant's fatherless little one! So thou has come to me at last, mon enfant! Art thou very tired, then? Nay, do not weep, the journey has been a long one for such small feet."

Drawing me into a room near, whereof I was too timed to notice anything but that it smelt of roses, she rang a bell. In a moment a middle-aged woman appeared, with a sweet, sober face, dressed in black like her mistress, with one of those pretty Normandy caps which framed the face like an aureole.

"Esperance, this is Monsieur Constant's little one," said my grandmother, tremulously. "Do you see a likeness," asked my grandmother, with a kind of appeal in her voice. The old serving woman shook her head.

"My Monsieur Constant had deep brown eyes," she said. "The young demoiselle's eyes are gray. His complexion was a perfect olive; her skin is fair under her black hair. But, madame, she reminds me strikingly of the old portrait of the Princess Olga, which was brought from La Chaudelaye."

"You think so?" said my grandmother, with evident delight. "Yes, you are right, Esperance, it is so. She has the same low brow and short upper lip; she is aristocratic to the backbone. Thank heaven, there can be very little of the Carewes about her!"

"She is tired, madame. It is seven o'clock. I shall take her straight to bed. Yes, my lamb," she went on to me, "very if thou will, thou must be so weary. It is a frightful journey for so young a creature."

I laid myself down in the strong arms and wept quietly. My grandmother stole up and stroked my hair.

"She must wait, then, until to-morrow to see her Uncle Remy," said she, softly. "I wonder, Esperance, will he, too, see the likeness which we have discovered?"

"I think so," said Esperance, "and Monsieur Remy will also be a playfellow for her. I dare say the master scared her."

"Yes," observed madame, regretfully, "my poor Victor is not a ladies' man."

I wondered, sleepily, whether Victor were Hercules, who had vanished miraculously as soon as my grandmother appeared; also, I wondered how my Uncle Remy, who must of necessity be grown up, could be my playfellow; and so I fell to the touch of soft lips on my tear-stained cheeks, and was carried up the wide, shallow oak staircase, along a corridor, and into the sweetest little chamber imaginable.

CHAPTER III.

I was awakened on my first morning at Burnside by singing. A young, vigorous man's voice was caroling in the garden below me. I sprang from my bed, drew aside my rose-colored curtains, and peeped forth; but the singer had disappeared. Esperance now entered and proceeded to wash and dress me.

At the door I paused, and demanded in a low voice of Esperance: "Who is the gentleman who drove me from Kingsdeg yesterday—what is his name?"

"Bless me! Why, that is Mr. Burnside, the master of the house."

"But Mr. Burnside is dead," I objected.

"True, Mr. Burnside who was husband to madame is dead; but this is his son, Monsieur Victor. Now, run in, dear child, and greet thy grandmother."

I entered timidly. My grandmother was presiding over a most tempting breakfast table. At the other end of the table sat Mr. Burnside, quietly unfolding the Times.

The lion looked no less terrible without his hat than with it. He turned on me a half-puzzled, half-amused glance. I drew reluctantly near, and received a grave and awkward "How do you do, Miss Damien?"

I retreated as far as possible from him to the other end of the table, and at that moment was heard an elastic step on the gravel outside, the French window was flung open, and a young man bounded in and flung his arms round my grandmother with effusion.

"Good-morning, my dearest," she replied to his ardent salutation; "see Remy, here is your little niece—poor Constant's little girl."

My uncle flung himself on his knees beside me and encircled me with his arm. His beautiful face was close to mine. I saw dark masses of clustering curls, a rich brown skin, sparkling black eyes, a slight dark moustache on the impetuous lip, and a warm flush of color in the cheeks. My heart went out to him at once. His smile of pleasure and amity won me. I gave to him willingly the kiss for which he entreated, and in a minute found myself enthroned upon his knee, shy, yet utterly happy.

"Tell me, Remy," said my grandmother, wistfully, "do you see any likeness?"

"To my brother? None. But I tell you to whom I do see a likeness—to our Muscovite ancestress, the Princess Olga!"

"I am enchanted," said madame.

I do not know when my life at Burnside first became an ordinary thing to me. I was wonderfully happy there. Every day developed some new pleasure, though the life at the Manor House was of the quietest and most retired order. My chief delight was in my rides with Uncle Remy. Esperance made me a little riding skirt, and together we scampered over Dartmoor, or traversed the old coach road, whence, at the high points, one could catch glimpses of the sea.

One day, many weeks after my arrival, when I had settled down into all the Burnside ways, and ceased to feel a single pang of homesickness, my uncle and I were riding along the coach road, past a pair of old gates, evidently leading to some park or country seat. As we passed, at a foot-pace, the heavy gate swung open, and a young, pretty girl stepped out into the road. She glanced up as she was closing the latch, met my uncle's eye, and bowed, with a blush and a smile. He instantly checked his horse, and raised his hat, with looks of most evident pleasure.

"How do you do, Miss Lyndon? I did not know you were returned from London."

"How do you do, Mr. Damien?" was the answer, in a fresh and prepossessing voice. "We only returned yesterday evening. Who is your fair lady?"

"It is my little niece, Olga Damien. She and I are sworn brothers and the best of comrades."

"I am delighted to see her, and hope we may be better friends," said this delightful young lady. "We are going to have a garden party next week; I shall certainly inclose a card for Miss Olga Damien. Will Mr. Damien's pressing engagements allow him to honor us with his presence?"

Remy burst forth into a vehement declaration that ropes should not keep him from the Brooklands on the day mentioned; at which Miss Lyndon laughed, waved her hand, and walked quickly away up the lane.

After this meeting my uncle was silent and abstracted during a long portion of our ride. That day at lunch he announced suddenly, "the Lyndons are back at the Brooklands." The squire looked up, and I saw a frown of annoyance gather on his usually passive face. His stepbrother looked defiantly at him.

"When did they come home?" growled the squire.

"Last night," was the airy reply. "They are going to give a garden party next week, and Olga is to be included in the invitation."

"I give you due notice that I do not go," went on the squire.

"That is a pity; you will be terribly missed," answered my uncle, with greatest gravity.

My grandmother, who had been listening to this jangle with evident uneasiness, now thought it prudent to interfere.

"No more of this, pleasa, my sons," said she; and neither of the young men spoke another word.

It was my first intimation that this quarrel of Devonshire household possessed, like other households, a skeleton in their cupboard. I had never before seen the domestic peace disturbed in any way. But, as I looked at the lowering brows of Mr. Burnside, under which his blue eyes seemed to shoot sparks, I pitied Uncle Remy from the bottom of my heart.

CHAPTER IV.

Next day my uncle Remy elected that we should not go for a ride; instead, we would go for a walk through the hay fields. I acquiesced, as I should have done in anything he had proposed. So we took a lunch of strawberries and cake in a little basket, and went off together. We came to a stop at length in a delicious meadow which, like all Devonshire meadows, lay on the slope of a hill. Uncle Remy appeared to be in a drowsy and contemplative state of mind. He lay full length on the warm, fragrant hay, and allowed me to pile it up behind his head to keep off the sun. This done, I crept to his side and lay down with my head on his arm.

"What are you thinking about just now—this very minute?" I demanded.

"I? Oh, nothing that would interest you, child. I say, Olga, did you notice Miss Lyndon, the young lady we met yesterday?"

"Why, yes, of course."

"Didn't you think her very pretty?"

"I think she's the prettiest person I ever saw, and the nicest, too. Are you going to marry Miss Lyndon, Uncle Re?"

He started.

"I don't know, child. No one can say beforehand what he or she will do. If only I were free——"

"Are you not free? You are grown up," I said, wondering. On this he burst forth with bitterness.

"Free? I am chained like a captive! I wear a galling yoke! Almost as I raise my arms" suiting the action to the word—"I expect to hear my chains rattle! I cannot do as I like half so much as you can, child Olga! Not may you never know the bitterness of being bound as I am—eating another's bread, and expected in return to do as I am told, and look pleasant! It is servitude—ignominious slavery."

I was fairly puzzled. I had certainly never before noticed any signs of the bondage of which he spoke. He seemed as unshackled as the June, hay-scented breeze which cooled our foreheads.

"Yes," he resumed, "I am like the miserable French nation when Marat gripped her by the throat! I be unable to help myself; yet all the time obliged to gasp out 'Vive la Liberté!' Oh, where is the Charlotte Corday who will rid me of the tyrant?"

The allusion to Charlotte Corday was the only thing in this sentence which caught my attention. I reminded my uncle that he had promised me the history of this heroine, who, he had told me, was one of my French ancestors. His eye lit up.

"I feel exactly now in the mood for telling it," he said. "So listen to me well, you little descendant of the noblest daughter of France."

So his emphatic, melodious, voluble French voice related the account of Marat's assassination, and, as he called it, the martyrdom of his murderess. I lay entranced, deep among the hay—buried in it almost—so that all I could see was the blue, deep sky, with occasionally the flight of a bright bird across it. Uncle Remy began to sing the "Marseillaise." How he could sing! The martial words rang across the quiet English hayfield with a quaintly incongruous effect.

The next few days passed quietly. We did not again meet Miss Lyndon, although I am sure, now I look back upon it, that Uncle Remy purposely bent his steps to the places where we were most likely to meet her. To me the days seemed to fall by on leaden wings—the slow days which stood between me and that garden-party.

I was awake by 6 on the eventful morning, and when the withdrawal of my window curtains showed me a cloudless sky, I could have cried with joy. The carriage came round at 11 o'clock—the large open carriage and pair which was only used on state occasions. What excitement and what with the awe of having Mr. Burnside's formidable beard opposite me, I never uttered a syllable during the whole drive. I know my heart was beating as the carriage shot past the old gateway leading to the Brooklands, and I squeezed Uncle Re's hand.

What a fairy sight met my gaze when we alighted! The broad terrace lawns were gay with ladies attired in every delicate hue of pale blue, coral, amber, terra-cotta, and cream. Tennis was going on in three separate courts, and the proceedings were enlivened by the strains of a band playing a soft, German-sounding waltz.

I cannot here describe the delights of that afternoon; how we swung, played tennis, ransacked the fruit garden, and constantly repaired to the marquee on the lawn for tees. I now and then caught a glimpse of Uncle Remy, now and then of grandmother, who was sitting under the trees, and now and then of the squire, walking and talking, or, once or twice, standing still and blank, as if lost in unpleasant thought.

At last the wonderful, beautiful day came to an end. Miss Lyndon's nieces, Hugh and Chrissie, and I had finished our game of tennis, and were reclining on a garden-seat, while I recited the others with a tale about a knight and a wizard, which was one of the many that Uncle Re used to tell me. Suddenly a quick, firm step crunched on the gravel, and, looking up, I beheld Mr. Burnside.

"Child, we have been looking for you everywhere; be quick, the carriage is waiting," he said, in a voice which sounded irritated and harsh.

Uncle Re never spoke to me like that, nor called me "child" in that way, as if I had been doing something naughty. I made my adieus, and followed him reluctantly. He walked on, his thoughts miles away from the little girl who trotted beside him—how amazed he would have been could he have known of the stormy, resentful feelings then working in her mind. Uncle Re stood at the carriage door, his lips set, his face defiant. Miss Lyndon I could not see.

I was very tired indeed. The even trot of the horses' hoofs was soothing and sleepy. I leaned my head on Uncle Re's shoulder, and he passed his arm round me. I shut my heavy eyes, and only half roused to consciousness as my uncle lifted me out of the carriage, and the lamplight dashed in the hall at Burnside.

"Remy, I should like to speak to you at once in the library," I heard the squire say.

"With all my heart," answered Remy, defiantly.

Uncle Remy, still with me in his arms, walked into the library.

CHAPTER V.

Uncle Remy carried me into the library, and laid me down on a sofa covered with a fur rug. The squire stood erect before the carved oak mantelpiece. In a low chair over the back of which a stuffed pelican impertinently gorged, sat mademoiselle, and Remy's graceful limbs were dispersed over two chairs, his head resting on his elbow, his fingers buried among his black curls.

"Now, Remy, I want you to tell me at once, clearly and without equivocation, what you intend to do."

"My good friend, as soon as this momentous interview is over, I intend to go to bed."

"Without equivocation," said the squire in a mutted growl like distant thunder.

"Express yourself more clearly, Victor, I beg. What do you mean?"

"You perfectly know my meaning. What do you intend to do as regards Miss Lyndon?"

"I can't see what earthly right you have to ask."

"You cannot? Well, I will tell you. While you live under my roof I refuse to allow you to offer to any lady such an insult as the offer of your hand would be. When you leave this house, as you are free to do at any moment, you can, of course, indulge in any such idiotic, guardly meanness as you think fit, but while you live at Burnside I will not have it."

"Have you any further names to call me in the presence of my mother? I begin to see the reason why the virtuous squire so strongly disapproves of my proceedings," said Remy, sarcastically. "It appears that he, too, has cast an admiring eye on the golden apple."

"Such an attempt to waive the point will serve you nothing, Remy," was the firm reply. "I merely wish you to understand that I will not have you conducting yourself like this under my roof. If you wish to marry Miss Lyndon you can leave Burnside and take a house of your own."

"Noble, generous being," said Remy, through clinched teeth; "you are admirably consistent as well as essentially charitable. If you think so much of Miss Lyndon's broken heart, why not give me the wherewithal to mend it? You could well spare it."

"You have asked me to tell you why, and I will," returned the squire, folding his arms and frowning Remy coldly. "I will not stir a finger to facilitate your marriage, because I consider that a man who refuses to do a single stroke of honest work is a man who would make any good woman miserable. You are totally unworthy of Miss Lyndon."

"Remy," said madame, raising her eyes for the first time and looking very pale, "my son, tell me, is your love for that beautiful girl deep and enduring? Would you be prepared to make sacrifices for her sake?"

"Really, sweet mother, I am hardly prepared to answer such questions in public," he replied. "I must bow to my destiny. I admit, frankly, that a nobleman of France is totally unable to compend with the delicately put arguments of a Devonshire yeoman. Were I to explain myself more fully to Victor, I should doubtless fail to make myself understood by his superior intellect."

"Could you not give him something to do, Victor—help him to some appointment?" pleaded madame.

"Madame, as you know very well, I once made Remy half of the estates. The result of that experiment was not such as to make me ready to repeat it. Remy has shown himself utterly adrift for a position of trust. Now we have had enough wrangling; let me go on to say what I asked to speak to you for. I require from you, before you leave this library, a promise to go straight to Mr. Lyndon to-morrow and tell him exactly your circumstances. You have no money; you do not intend to try to earn any; you wish to marry his daughter. I want to see what he will say to the rapport of kindred spirits?"

"Such a promise you will never get from me," said Remy, between his teeth. "Mean, base and cowardly are the adjectives you have applied to me. Look at home and see if the cap fits. You, rolling in money, who, though born with the constitution of a plowman, have never known what it was to want. I, born a descendant of one of the noblest families in the world, have all my life groveled in the dust, eating your bread—flung to me grudgingly, and with reproaches. You do not scruple to torture my finest feelings, you goad me to madness with a sense of my obligations! I will not promise."

"Here has that child been all the time," observed the squire, breaking a somewhat dreadful pause. "I will ring for Esperance to take her to bed."

Esperance carried me upstairs and undressed me. I was so silent all the time that she thought I was still half asleep. She heard my prayers, tucked me up in my little white bed, and left me. As soon as she was gone I sat up, my arms round my knees, my eyes wide and sleepless.

The whole of what I had just heard was ringing in my ears. "Oh, poor Uncle Remy!" What a sordid, merciless heart had the squire! Tears rushed into my eyes as I thought of the misery of my uncle and sweet Miss Lyndon. How they loved each other! What would be the consequences if they were betrayed! The next morning the tyrant was going to the Brooklands to carry the fatal message which would ruin two lives. "Oh, could there be no one to help?" Was there no one to help Uncle Remy? No one who could crush the tyrant? No—Charlotte Corday.

I paused. My heart seemed to give one leap and then stand still. Once me, like a revelation, came the thought of what I had the power to do. Motionless, hugging the dreadful thought, I sat till Esperance came up to bed. I heard her moving about, undressing in her room. Then the light was extinguished—she must lie down to sleep. I rose from bed. There was no guard on my sleep to save my little misguided hands and keep me from my madness. If the tyrant were removed Uncle Re would have Beautiful Burnside all to himself, and could bring Miss Lyndon home to it, so I reasoned in my ignorance. I rose and shook back my hair. I knew exactly where there was a knife—a Damascene dagger, hanging in the hall, which Uncle Re had often drawn from its velvet sheath for my benefit, making the keen blade flash in the sun.

I paused and listened. The whole house was still. My whole being was centered on the awful end I had in view. I crept along the corridor to the door of the squire's room. It was not locked; it yielded to my pressure, and I stole in. The moonlight flooded the room. The only sound was the squire's regular breathing. He lay with one arm thrown up under his head, the other stretched on the counterpane. I felt as though he must hear the loud thumpings of my heart. I turned sick and faint. The very thought of blood to me was an abhorrence; not a tremendous power, not myself, seemed to have taken possession of me. It was my duty, and do it I would. I climbed on a large footstool by the bed——

I scarcely know how to write it. I raised the knife in both hands, and brought it down with all my might. I heard a sudden, choking, smothered cry, and terror, such as I cannot describe, took possession of me. The sleeping man writhed and started up. I wildly tugged out my murderous weapon; I had aimed as near to the heart as I knew how. The dagger had something glittering wet upon it. I threw it to the further end of the room and fled. It seemed to myself hardly a second before I was back in bed in my own room, every limb shaking as if with the ague. I lay with my face buried in the pillows, hearing the monotonous beatings of my heart, as if it would burst. Should I ever sleep again. I wondered. Gradually the moon set, the stars faded, the dawn came up over the heavy Devon landscape. It was broad daylight at last, and, as I lay, hating the level beams of the hot morning sun, before I knew it my eyes closed, and I sank into an uneasy slumber.

In my sleep I enacted over again the dread tragedy of the night. I dreamed that I stole from the bed, procured the Damascus dagger, and entered the room of the sleeping squire. Again in fancy I raised the weapon and struck with all my force; and again I heard that cry. I sprang out of bed, my heart in my mouth. Surely that cry was not a dream; and as I stood, every nerve convulsed, on the floor of my room, the cry was repeated more loudly, in accents of horror and alarm. "Murder! Murder!"

I opened my door. Uncle Remy at the same moment opened his, and came out, without his coat, and with a white, scared face. One of the men servants, with white lips and wild eyes, was running down the corridor.

"Oh, Lord, Mr. Damien, it's murder, neither more nor less! Oh, in heaven's name, come here——"

"What do you mean?"

"Mr. Burnside, sir—the squire——"

I saw my uncle stagger and lurch back against the wall.

"I went to call him this morning, sir, as usual, and I found him lying on the floor, midway between the bed and the door, and all over blood."

"Man, you're dreaming—it can't be."

"Come this!" I interposed, trembling with excitement.

He never even saw me. He ran like an arrow down the corridor, and I heard his cry of agonized horror as he entered the chamber of my victim.

(To be continued.)

BOY CHORISTERS.

Subtle Ways in Which the Choirmaster Replenishes His Choir.

The forming of a boy choir seems to be a matter of considerable difficulty. Singularly enough, the Sunday school furnishes very few recruits for this purpose, and in almost every instance the choirmaster is forced to apply to the public schools for boys.

When he has obtained the necessary permission, he goes straight to the classroom and sees the boys personally. Then his troubles begin. Who would believe that the pugnacious, much possible school boy cares a jot about it when it comes to a question of dressing up in close dance with a strange "grown-up?" This, nevertheless, is just what happened. But finally, by dint of much persuasion and many allurements, several hundred boys are won over to accept an invitation to visit the church.

So far, so good. But when the appointed day arrives, out of this goodly number perhaps a single dozen lads appear. The resolution of the rest melted away when it came to the critical point of actually entering upon an experience so strange and unusual. When the voices of the dozen courageous ones are tried, possibly a half of them will be found with the training. So that the promising two or three hundred recruits have dwindled, under the choirmaster's eye, to a mere dozen or six.

Thankful for this scant surplus at least, he begins training his little company. Another rehearsal, and then more ex[illegible] follows. This boy has missed the rehearsals [illegible] time from his play. That boy has chanced to mention the entertainment at home, and for some reason or other his parents withdraw him, and so on until even the scant remainder of the original array has sunk to a mere two or three, and, with a sigh, the choirmaster thanks the propitious fates for these.

Then the master begins to exercise his ingenuity in other directions. He offers a bonus to the members who will bring in other boys. Sometimes this device works admirably, the flourishing choir of St. James' Church, of which Mr. Harris shall be master, is maintained almost wholly in this manner. In every audience a boy will persuade his friend to remain until the hymn is sung, and then, having received his share of the reward, the new recruit departs again on his way.—Trust.

Apparently the German hen is not doing her duty, and the country is threatened with an egg famine. Hence the Kaiser has sent to the United States a special envoy to report upon the American hen. This augurs well for a closer commercial relation between the two countries. The Kaiser knows a good hen when he sees one.

Good Roads Notes

Value of Good Roads.

The matter of highway improvement is one of such interest and importance that any one who contributes to the sum of knowledge on the subject and helps to enlighten the public as to the best means of doing the work is a public benefactor. Gratifying progress has been made in this State during the last few years toward putting highways in better condition. Public sentiment has been aroused, communities in various localities have come to a realizing sense of the necessities of the case, and the enactment of the Fuller and Highbie-Armstrong laws has given an opportunity to put this sentiment to practical use. While the roads of the State are still very far from what they ought to be, there are object lessons, so to speak, here and there which tell of improved highways show what can be done by proper effort and what benefits result.

In no county of the State, perhaps, has there been more intelligent and effective work done in the interest of the reform than in Oneida. The Oneida County League for Good Roads is a very energetic organization, and it can point to some most creditable achievements. It has just issued a pamphlet which is most instructive reading. It shows what has been done in Oneida County, what is yet to be done, and what can be done elsewhere under existing laws. The league at first directed its efforts toward familiarizing the people with the objects sought, with the provisions of the law and with moderate experiments, in order to convince the taxpayers that it was to their interests to have good roads. So now, asserts a circular which accompanies the pamphlet, "Oneida County leads in the understanding of the question of road improvement in the State. Every method of road improvement has been experimented with, and the experiment successfully completed, with the exception of the appointment of a county engineer and the adoption of the county road system, and this is under advisement."—Troy Daily Times.

Convict Labor and Good Roads.

President Moore said in his address before the Good Roads convention recently held in Chicago:

"Illinois spends about $4,000,000 a year in the improvement of her highways. Seventy-five per cent. of that money is being wasted. By the utilization of the convict labor of the country, together with the vagrants and tramps who are responsible for fully ninety per cent. of the crime committed annually in this and other large cities, we would not only save over $2,000,000 yearly and have very much better roads, but we would do away with at least fifty per cent. of crime. The arrests in Chicago every year alone number about 110,000. There is plenty of work on the roads to keep every available man busy.

"I believe we are opening the greatest era in road construction in history, and I believe the results of this convention will be wonderful. Committees will be appointed to draft bills to be presented to the Legislatures of thirty-eight States and to the National Congress at Washington. We have the support already of nearly a hundred Congressmen and Senators who will aid the movement when it reaches them."

The Economy of Good Roads.

During the first third of the nineteenth century much was done by State and National Governments to promote the building of good roads, since these were the only highways of passenger travel and freight traffic on land. When the era of steam railroads had fairly opened the policy referred to received a setback. Nevertheless, within the last ten years there has been a wonderful revival of interest. The Road Maker, following up this line of thought, remarks:

"We have awakened to find ourselves confronted with the fact that the average cost of transporting goods from the farm to the market is twenty-five cents a ton a mile, or about the same as it was twenty-five years ago. During this same period the cost of transporting goods by rail has been reduced to one-fifth of its former cost. During those years farm property has depreciated, and we are at a loss to find the reasons for its decline. The facts are that its surroundings have not kept pace with our advanced ideas of modern civilization, and many people who would otherwise remain on the farm have sought relief in the cities.

A Bishop and a Beetle.

The Peterborough correspondent of a contemporary tells the following charming anecdote of the late Bishop of London: "On one occasion he was heading a procession down the nave of Peterborough Cathedral when he observed a black beetle crawling directly in his path. Fearing that the insect would escape the attention of those following, he stooped, picked it up, and, placing it out of the line of route, passed on to his throne."—London Globe.

A Grewsome Relic.

The widowed Queen Margherita of Italy has recently come into possession of a rather grewsome relic, namely, the bullet that killed her husband, King Humbert. The Queen keeps the bullet in a beautifully jeweled reliquary of crystal and silver gilt, and it occupies a conspicuous place just above the prie dieu in her bed chamber.