

NEWTON'S BRAIN

BY JAKUB ARBES

I WANT to tell an amusing story and yet begin at a grave. It is cynical; but I hope that after a few words of explanation even tender souls will forgive me.

Severe and implacable Science has robbed many of us of the sweetest dream of life; her cruel hand has torn asunder that veil which has covered the destiny of living beings after death, and a dreadful, but more or less clear, perspective opens to every one who trusts to her proofs, instead of to old traditional, though pleasant, prejudices.

Why, then, should we lament at the grave of a man who believed — nay, what is more, who was convinced — that all that blesses or grieves us ends with death? Why mourn the death of a man who disliked sorrow?

The man of whom I speak had been a friend of mine from his early youth, and died — or, more correctly, was killed — in the battle of Königgrätz, as an officer of Prince

Konstantin's regiment. A Prussian sabre cut his skull in two.

His father was manager of Prince Kinský's garden. We were remote relations; and although my friend's family was quite rich, while mine was poor, we lived in most intimate friendship for almost twenty years. We played together in childhood and studied together in boyhood.

Our life and studies were as peculiar as our inclinations. At first we busied ourselves with everything that came into our hands: we examined, analyzed, and discussed whatever chance would bring us. Our debates were lively — nay, impassioned. But the exchange of strange, often eccentric opinions was pleasing and tempting; and there was not a single day, perhaps, that we did not debate something seemingly beyond solution. This thoughtless, desultory study naturally had no practical ends; but it developed our dialectics and inflamed our fancy, which often performed real wonders in the world of the *bizarre*.

To the no small grief of our fathers, neither I nor my friend was very proficient at school.

In our "private" studies, however, — that is, in those sciences which we loved above all, — we excelled all our fellow-students. Nature had endowed me with ugliness and

my friend with beauty, and our inclinations were similarly dissimilar: I liked dry and tiresome mathematics, whereas he preferred the fresh and noble natural sciences. But we were so far from a true scientific course that I really do not know whether I should not regard all we studied then as mere play.

There was, however, some definite end in my friend's studies. He studied mainly physics, chemistry, mechanics, and a few kindred branches, — but all with a view to *escamotage*. God knows when and where he conceived the idea of having special talents for *escamotage*; but from that time nothing interested him unless it had some connection with his hobby. In all his doings he aimed at acquiring skill in that playful pseudo-science, as he called it; and from his favorite sciences he picked out only what was related to it.

His father knew nothing about it, for he worked in secret. I was his only confidential friend, and it was in my room that the most varied experiments were performed. Every single penny that he could earn or get he turned toward buying magical tools, or books on *escamotage*; all of which he deposited in my room. In a few years there were so many curious instruments and appliances heaped within this narrow precinct that it

looked very much like the study of a mediæval alchemist.

Pursuing his hobby with zeal, my friend made such rapid progress in *escamotage* as showed that he was really very gifted. But the more he prospered in it the more his passion grew; and thus it often happened that while I was busy figuring out how high, under certain conditions, a balloon of a certain weight filled with one or another gas must rise, only a few feet from me my friend was repeating for the thousandth time a trifling experiment — how, at a moment's notice, to throw a given card out of a pack.

Oftentimes he would experiment in my absence, and then surprise me with many a clever piece of work. His labors were never superficial, and he despised common jugglery. His secret lay in aptly combining various mechanical, chemical, and physical effects. Statics and dynamics, optics with its branches, acoustics, magnetism, electricity, synthetical and analytical chemistry, — all these and in part other sciences also, as astronomy, anatomy, physiology, were mastered by him with an unusual earnestness in the course of seven or eight years; but all with a view to *escamotage*.

He bought every book or pamphlet, no matter how trifling, which dealt with *escamo-*

tage or kindred matters, as magic, alchemy, astrology, magnetism, and somnambulism, mystics, chiromancy, and the like. His library, which, like his instruments, he kept in my room, was an odd collection. Beside books of actual value, works of famous *savants* like Newton, Linné, Locke, Leibnitz, Bacon, Arago, Wolf, Lavoisier, Cartesius, Brown, Mohs, Cuvier, Humboldt, etc., you might see books of unknown or forgotten pseudo-scientists and charlatans; *e.g.*, "Ten Books on the Secrets of Nature," by Paracelsus Bombastus, published in Strasburg in 1570; or Mehnu's "Mirror of Alchemy;" Böckmann's "Archives of Magnetism and Somnambulism;" Cagliostro's "Adventures;" Commiers's "Les Oracles des Sybilles," published about a hundred years ago; Crusius's work on Schroepfer's art of summoning spirits; Wincer's "Demonology," and many other like works. But the clear mind of my friend was elevated above that enormous mass of men's errors. He studied those strange books rather from curiosity than for use, although he was well aware that knowledge of such mental aberrations might assist him in strengthening natural delusions.

His work was not only thorough, but also independent. He not only learned known experiments, but invented new ones, and

through systematical efforts endeavored to place his pseudo-science upon a broad and secure basis. No wonder, then, that later his performances surpassed all expectations. His elegant appearance, his eloquence, a light and even sarcastic wit, and a technical skill acquired through many years' training served him well in the most difficult experiments. As evidence of his skill, I shall mention a few out of many hundreds of more or less familiar experiments which I have myself seen: swallowing burning tar and stones, drawing threads and ribbons out of one's mouth, thrusting a knife into one's breast, are mostly feats of obsolete jugglery; but he knew how to perform these and other tricks so well that he could rival the most famous magician.

At the wedding feast of one of my relatives he once performed an original and pretty experiment: we were seated at a long table, in the centre of a spacious hall. There were about twelve persons in all. The bride was sitting at the head of the table, the bridegroom beside her, then the bridesmaid and the groomsman. I sat opposite the bridesmaid; my friend was at the other end of the table, about nine feet from the bride. We were in gay spirits. The menu was excellent, and joke and jest soon ruled the field of talk. When the feast was near its end a

large deep dish of boiled crabs was served and placed before the bride. But she either did not fancy that dish or was too mindful of etiquette; for she asked the groom to pass it on. He obeyed, and the dish passed from hand to hand until it came, though nearly empty, back to the bride. Only small crabs were left, and seeing that the groom had not yet been served, the bride was about to pick out for him one or two of the best that were left; she bowed her head a little, looked over the dish with her pretty blue eyes, and seized the largest crab. But hardly had she put it on the groom's plate when she shrieked in terror and pushed back from the table: from the plate there looked at her a loathsome toad.

"What's that?" the bridegroom cried out, and stabbed the creature with his fork. The toad leaped from the plate upon the table in front of the bride. All the guests showed surprise; but my friend, quietly sitting at the other end of the table, said, "Why do you stab the little unfortunate?" Then he arose and touched the toad, which leaped over the bride's head toward the door.

The bridegroom jumped from his seat, and with one foot trod upon it. To the amazement of all it moaned in a human voice, "Alas, now I am dead!" The groom stepped

back, my friend stooped to the floor and, instead of a toad, picked up a snow-white glove. Taking the bride's handkerchief, he wrapped the glove in it, and, placing the handkerchief before the bride, he murmured, like the famous Bosco, the magic Italian formula, "*Spiriti miei, ubbidite!*" And when one of the guests had unfolded the handkerchief he found there a pair of choice gold ear-rings — my friend's gift to the bride.

To prove the death of a sparrow, pigeon, hare, mole, or some other little animal, and then with a penknife cautiously to take out its brain from the skull, replace it with a perfumed piece of cotton, and then to order the animal slowly to wake up to life as though it were reviving from a swoon, and afterward to jump up and fly or flee away, is a feat of *escamotage* well enough known; but my friend would perform it in so many ways that it interested even those spectators who had many times seen like experiments.

I should need a thick book to exhaust his repertory; but from the few examples I have mentioned it will be seen that he could honorably compete with the most skilful conjurers. His main efforts, however, were directed toward summoning spirits. His apparatus and the means he employed were concealed even from me. Once he told me if I wished to

see any historical personage that he would call him. I named Napoleon I.

Several nights had passed, but Napoleon did not put in an appearance; once, however, after I had forgotten the promise of my friend, I was awakened from sleep by a gentle tapping at my door. Rising, I rubbed my eyes; but as the tapping was repeated I asked, "Who is there?" No one answered; the door quietly opened, and in stepped, with a grave gait, Napoleon I., just as I had oftentimes seen him pictured, — in a gray coat, white breeches, with high riding-boots and the historical three-cornered hat. Silently he walked to the window, and back to the door. I wanted to address the vision, but did not; and as a curiosity I must confess that to this day I do not know *why* I did not.

I did not see more experiments of this kind. Whenever I wished anything like it my friend always referred me to some later time when he would have all the necessary apparatus and be better skilled. Sometimes he told me that he was engaged in constructing automaton, with the aid of which he expected to perform real "miracles," and delude entire companies of *savants* and scientists. He intended to invite a considerable number of friends and lovers of this kind of amusement, and to perform experiments of

the most complicated and intricate kinds. He assured me that I would really be surprised; and, taking all I saw into account, I could readily judge that he would fulfil his word.

We lived and studied thus for several years. Our study — many-sided at first, afterward one-sided — was not fruitless. Shortly before 1860 our records were so low that we had to stay another year in the same class. We stayed; and at the end of the year we failed again, and next year we failed the third time. The father of my friend, who often jokingly threatened to apprentice his son to a cobbler if he continued to fail, finally lost all patience, and, in a family conference, it was decreed that the best thing for him to do would be to become a soldier. He did not object, and a short time afterward called on me dressed in the uniform of a cadet of the foot regiment of Prince Konstantin of Russia.

"Well, what are *you* doing?" he inquired, shaking hands with me.

"I am going to be a carpenter."

"Forever?"

"I do not know; I am practising now, or, in other words, I am entered as an apprentice, although I have not yet had an axe in my hands."

"And probably you never will have one,"

laughed the young candidate of a bloody trade.

"Maybe," I replied; "and probably your hands will never touch any of your magic tools any more!"

"Far from it! I have just come to rid you of this rubbish. Why, you can hardly move here!"

"Very well. But where shall we put it?"

"To-morrow I shall send several boxes; you will help me to pack them. I shall have them secretly delivered in the cellars of the Prince's castle; and should I ever — when I feel lonesome in Trieste or Pesth, or some Catholic village of the Tyrol, you know — well, then I shall write to you, and you will look up the necessary instruments and send them to me."

I promised to do so. The next day we filled no less than five large boxes with books, apparatus, and other magicians' trash. On the following day the boxes were carried away. We saw each other several more times; but two or three weeks afterward he was ordered to leave for Königgrätz, the seat of his regiment. From then on I was lonely. My friend did not write, nor did I; and thus our formerly indissoluble friendship ended with mutual, though only seeming, indifference.

* * *

Two years later — I believe it was in January or February of 1866 — my friend sent me a letter. He told me various incidents, of his life, recalled the “folly” of his studies, and, asking me to reply soon, concluded thus:

Do you know the phrase “Let pleasure live”? If you do not, you would learn to know it in its full extent if you were an officer of the same regiment with me. I should never ask for jollier comrades or a more pleasant life. Only sometimes, — sometimes only, understand, — when the last days of the month have come and the salary has gone, I feel rather melancholy. Several times I thought how I might prevent this, but never ventured to follow my wishes, and therefore I beg you now, write me if you know of any one who would be as crazy now as I was years ago. Possibly he might purchase either all or a part at least of my tools and instruments, which I have stored in the cellars of Prince Kinský's villa.

I did not expect such a conclusion of the letter. Knowing his passion for his favorite pursuit, I could not believe that he had freed himself altogether from it; and thinking that this was either a momentary fancy or an *escamoteur's* attempt to deceive me, I simply replied that I knew of no one who would buy that which he offered for sale.

A partial proof, at least, that I was not mistaken was his second letter. He declared that after all his endeavors to forsake and forget his folly, *escamotage*, he could not

but try if he could rid himself of his passion by selling his apparatus; but that as soon as he sent the letter he felt sorry for having written it, and he added that even in case a purchaser had been found he would not have sold his instruments. In times of leisure, he wrote, he always thought of constructing his automats; and he assured me that if his exhibition of them should ever take place it would be magnificent.

Shortly before the Austro-Prussian war was declared, I received one more letter from my friend—the last one. It was again written in a gay, almost frivolous tone. I give here the following passage:

In a few days, perhaps, we shall be ordered to go to the battlefield. Pity your unhappy friend. Without any apparatus, cards, mirrors, tinctures, and other necessities, he will have to murmur, "*Spiriti miei, ubbidite!*" and the "spirits," always obedient, will, mayhap, for the first time refuse obedience. In the midst of a rain of bullets a small piece of lead is more powerful than magic *formulæ*, and my sword and my revolver will, perhaps, make many a one familiar with the mysterious truth that no human power can. Eh! why fall into sentimentality? Sooner or later each of us will learn, as have those innumerable millions of creatures who have preceded us, whether life ends with death. Why this useless philosophizing? When the last fierce struggle shall come, I shall, perhaps, mournfully beg, "*Spiriti miei, ubbidite!*" or, it may be, I shall not think of my "*spiriti*" at all.

Yet there is one thing I beg of you: should I get killed, don't mourn! Call our old friends together, and then think of me with cups of wine in your hands. If you grant this request, you may be sure that, even after that, I shall once more at least call on you.

Reading the last lines I smiled as we smile at a paradox.

From then on I heard nothing more of my friend until after the battle of Königgrätz. Just before the complete stoppage of the mails I received the following letter:

DEAR SIR: A young officer, a first lieutenant of the Königgrätz regiment, has to-day been brought to our town. He is severely wounded, — his skull is cut in two, — and he is constantly beside himself. He was found this morning, about an hour's journey hence, in a gorge, whither he seems to have crawled after being wounded. His identity has not yet been established; but I hope it will be either to-day or to-morrow. In a letter found in his pocket I found your address, and send you this sad news so that you may inform his relatives and friends.

Respectfully yours,

P. VOJTA NOSAL,

Parson, Nechanice.

Travelling through regions occupied by the Prussian army was neither easy nor pleasant; still, I decided at once to leave for Nechanice. I wrote a note to my friend's father, and enclosing the Parson's letter sent it by a

messenger; then, without waiting for a reply, I took a train for Kolin, and thence proceeded to Nechanice in a coach. I arrived at two o'clock in the morning. Prussian guards stopped the coach before the town. I told them where I was going, and a soldier was ordered to accompany me to the Parsonage. In a few minutes the coach stopped before the Parson's house; I rang the bell, a man opened the gate, heard the reason for my coming, and went to announce me to the Parson, just come back from tending a Saxon officer who lay dying in the church with other wounded soldiers. The Parson welcomed me politely, and, rejecting as politely my excuse for disturbing him so late, he led me to the upper floor, where he had his drawing-room and several other rooms arranged to receive the wounded. "His name has not yet been ascertained," the Parson said, as he opened the door; "but I hope you will recognize him."

We entered. The room was half dark. Along the walls there lay about twenty soldiers on improvised beds on the floor; several bedsteads bearing those severely wounded stood near the windows. The Parson led me to one of these, and silently raised the light. The head of the wounded man was surrounded with ice. I looked into

his pale face, and at once recognized my friend. He was still beside himself: there he lay motionless, with his eyes half shut, and his heavy breath was the only sign of life.

"It is three days now," the Parson whispered, "since he was brought hither, and the physicians give up all hope. They recommend quiet, ice, and quinine."

I was going to speak to my friend; but seeing his hard struggle I turned away, and we left the room. In the hall I thanked the Parson for his kindness, and was about to go; but he courteously invited me to be his guest at least until the next morning. Being tired to death, I gladly accepted the invitation, and stepped with my host into a large room on the ground floor.

"Do you know anything particular about my friend's accident, reverend sir?" I asked, as we were seated at a large table.

"In the terrible confusion that has reigned here for several days," the Parson answered, "it was impossible to obtain any certain information; for as yet we know nothing more about the dreadful battle of the third of July than a few details we learned from those slightly wounded. The regiment of your friend took part in the battle of Jiçín, where it was severed. One division retreated to

Smiřice; the other, the stronger of the two, turned southward, and was then joined to the first army corps. On the third of July this division was among the reserves of the first army corps, and it appears to have been sent to the aid of those fighting near Probluz about four o'clock in the afternoon; and in this skirmish your friend was wounded. Judging from the wound itself, he must have been struck with a sabre just as he was stooping down for something; for the upper part of the skull is almost wholly split off. His wound is a deadly one, and all the surgeons who have inspected the wound are wondering not a little that he is still alive."

Hardly had he said this when the door opened. In came one of the men who attended the wounded, and whispered something to the Parson. The sad look of the priest caused me involuntarily to ask:

"Is he dead?"

"Dead," the Parson sadly repeated.

Once more we went into the drawing-room. My friend lay on his bed, uncovered. His youthful face, once so handsome, wore an expression unutterably painful.

"He must be buried this morning," the Parson remarked. I stepped close to the bed and touched my friend's hand. It was ice-cold. Tears filled my eyes. I turned

away, and, being unable to speak, went downstairs with the Parson. The first dawn of day was already pouring in through the windows. Leaving me in the first room, the Parson went to his bedroom. I lay down, dressed, upon a sofa, but could not fall asleep. About two hours later the yard was full of men. I arose, and walking about the room awaited the funeral in feverish excitement.

After nine o'clock all soldiers that died of their wounds during the night were buried. I escorted my friend on his last journey, I saw how he was let down into the grave, and with a broken heart I returned to Prague.

* * *

Now, after many years have passed, after I have seen so many times how mercilessly Death often rages among the living, how suddenly his icy breath overtakes even vigorous persons, — now I can bear even my friend's death more easily, in accordance with his wishes and views, as a welcome deliverance from the griefs and woes with which so-called Providence has so liberally overwhelmed mortals. At that time, however, I was young — that is, at an age when the death of a beloved friend deeply affects even a person less sensitive than I was, and there-

fore it is no wonder that this death was a crushing blow.

At first it seemed to me impossible that he should be really dead. But when, at times, I recalled all the details, when I reminded myself of the truth that the grave never gives up its prey, when I reflected that I could never, never see my friend any more, that for me and for everybody else he was forever lost, — I felt an inexpressible bitterness. And yet, whenever I thought of him, the words of his last letter always came to my mind: "Should I get killed, don't mourn! Call our old friends together, and then think of me with cups of wine in your hands."

I held it to be my duty to fulfil even this last wish of his; but at first I was prevented by grief, and later by studies, which I renewed with double zest. Yet all mental toil could not obliterate his memory, or drive away the thought that I was violating our friendship in not fulfilling his request.

Nearly four months had passed since his death, and the autumn had already come, when I determined to perform his last wish. Toward the end of October I invited all our old comrades and some acquaintances to come in the evening to a small inn in the Maltá Strana, renowned for its wine, where

in the past we had spent many an hour in merriment. But when I went there, I found that out of the twelve invited friends there had come — not a single one.

I sat sadly down, ordered a bottle of Bohemian wine, and betook myself to thinking. The tavern was empty, and so I could think uninterruptedly; and I thought of friendship, faithfulness, life, death, and God knows of what else. My thoughts and recollections were gloomy, bitter, painful. No wonder that one of the most vivid was the memory of my friend. His image still was vivid enough in my mind, though not as vivid as when I left Nechanice four months ago. It was losing its vividness, and the thought that sometime it would vanish altogether, and that after some years I should probably be unable to recall a single feature of his face, caused my soul great bitterness.

“Never!” — for the first time in my life did I understand the deep and fearful meaning of that simple word that is so often spoken every day. Never to see a beloved face; never to touch a dear hand — never — never!

The longer I meditated upon the meaning of that fatal little word, the more hopeless were the thoughts which swarmed in my head. But what gave birth to those dark thoughts was not so much the circumstances

under which they originated as my own mental fatigue. For I had lately studied so earnestly that I had hardly left my room for two weeks. He who knows from experience how a long mental strain exhausts a man will understand my condition. For several months I had studied chiefly optics and mathematics as applied to astronomy; but my studies did not progress as I wished, and in my soul there was that chaos which precludes a clear comprehension of the more important principles of science.

No wonder that I oftener sought a glass than usual; no wonder that I left the tavern sooner than I had intended, and that, when I returned to my room, I felt more tired than when I left. I sat upon a chair near my writing-desk, took a book out of the case at random, opened it, and began reading. I had hardly glanced over half a page when I pushed the book aside, and resting my head on both my hands went on thinking, and by and by began to slumber.

All of a sudden I heard the hollow rattling of a carriage. I lifted my head and listened. A dead stillness was around me; only now and then I heard the moan of the autumnal wind. The rattling sound came nearer and nearer, until the carriage stopped, it seemed, in front of the house where I dwelt. I

wanted to rise and look from the window, but being tired I overcame my curiosity and remained seated. I heard how some one rang the janitor's bell, and how the door opened and was closed.

No one lived in the house who would come home in a carriage; but the sound of voices, especially the janitor's voice, showed that the comer was one who had a right to enter. In a few moments drowsiness overcame me again. I cannot say how long I dozed, but I was awakened by a gentle tapping at the chamber door. Again I lifted up my head and listened. A lamp was burning on the table before me, only faintly illuminating my study with its yellowish light; all around was as still as the grave.

But what is that? Again I heard a distinct knocking at the door.

"Come in!" I said with a feeble voice.

The door opened quietly, and in the dusk I saw the tall figure of a man. I was about ten steps from him, and could not distinguish his features nor his dress.

"Who are you, and what do you wish so late?" I addressed the figure that stood motionless at the door. Without answering, the man opened wide the door, and the yellowish glitter of the lamp fell upon his face. I cried out in amazement; I tried to

jump up, but my legs were too heavy. There he stood at the door. It was — my friend!

For a few moments the silence was unbroken. Not uttering a word, he stood motionless, while I could not turn my eyes away from him. His face was deadly pale; but the clear blue eyes were sparkling with life, and a light, kindly smile played about his lips.

“Good evening,” he said, after a while, and stepped forward a little. Hearing the clatter of a sabre, I noticed that he was dressed as a military officer.

“Why! are you not dead?” I asked, astonished.

“How can I be dead, and stand before you?” he replied, with his clear, agreeable voice.

“Am I asleep or awake?” I uttered, forcedly. “Did I not see you dying and dead — at Nechanice — with your skull cut in two?”

“Possibly you saw me, and possibly you saw some one else,” was the answer of my unexpected guest; “but now you see me standing before you safe and alive — there can be no doubt. Here is my hand!”

I hesitated a moment, but finally shook hands with him, and I found that his hand was not cold, but as warm as formerly.

"You complied with my last request," my friend continued, "and I have kept my word; I have come to see you."

"But how is all this possible?" I inquired diffidently.

"It is all very simple," he answered; "but please allow me to sit down, and I shall briefly tell you everything, for I have no time to lose."

Silently I drew a chair nearer, and my friend sat down by me.

"Well?" I asked.

"Doubtless you saw only an officer who looked like me when you were at Nechanice. It was First Lieutenant Jiruš, who was seriously wounded in the battle of Probluz and died at Nechanice, as I learned afterward. The mistake was possible only because he resembled me, that's all."

"But how was it possible that my letter to you was found on him?"

"That is very simple, too. A few hours before the battle a greater part of our regiment was lying in reserve in a small grove. The troops were ready for battle; the officers were walking from one company to another, or stood in groups talking. You must not think that the light military heart is particularly grave before battle. Jokes are perpetrated even in the hottest fight — the more so

while the soldiers are impatiently waiting for a signal to march or to fire. I well remember that I was not in good humor that day, and to escape *ennui* I took out your letter and read it a second time. By chance First Lieutenant Jiruš came unnoticed behind me, and thinking that I was reading a love-letter he snatched it in jest from my hands, intending to read it aloud to my colleagues; but at the same moment we were ordered to march out. Jiruš put the letter into his pocket and hastened to his company; while I drew my sabre and stepped into line. A moment later a fierce shooting followed, and we thought of nothing but the enemy. You know the end of the fight: I was captured, and have just returned from Königsberg, where I have been vexed with *ennui*."

"But why, at least, did you not write me a card?" I asked, when he finished.

"A mere whim," he answered quietly. "And besides, I followed your example, and wearied myself with mathematical and astronomical studies."

"But what brings you here so late? When did you come?" I asked urgently, being almost fully convinced that he was alive and well.

"I arrived this evening; but even yesterday our friends knew that I was coming, so

they failed to go to the tavern where you invited them. You are the only one whom I did not inform, in order to surprise you the more. I come now to invite you to a banquet which my father gives in the castle of Prince Kinský, in celebration of my safe return. At the same time I must tell you that I shall give there the great performance in *escamotage* which, as you know, I have been preparing for years. My automaton and other apparatus are all in the best order, and I hope to interest all the guests."

Everything I had just heard and seen showed that my friend, supposed to be dead, had really come to see me, and that his passion for *escamotage* was unabated.

"But why is the banquet given this very day? Can it not be postponed?" I asked, after a while.

"What an idea!" said he. "My father gives the entertainment with the consent of Prince Kinský, who has invited many guests. Look, the castle is all illuminated!"

Then he stepped to the window, from which a part of Kinský's villa could be seen, and rolled up the curtain. All the windows of the palace were, indeed, lighted.

"The banquet has already begun, about an hour ago," he went on; "my performance will begin later, and for this reason I came to

inform you. Come, if you like. But excuse me; you will have to come by foot alone. I must leave in haste and without you, purely for an *escamoteur's* reasons, of course. Will you come, then? "

"I will," I said, rising.

He arose quickly, shook hands, and left. I heard his steps, heard the door open and close, and then a carriage rattling along the street. I listened, listened until the sound died away.

All I had just witnessed was so strange, in spite of all explanation, that for a time I remained sitting motionless, unable to collect myself. Distrust soon arose in me. Being alone, and seeing nothing changed about me, I was ready to believe it all a dream; but the Prince Kinsky's illuminated palace, which I saw from my window, confirmed the opinion that I was really awake, and that I was able, nay, obliged, to perform my friend's request.

I shall never forget the sensation I felt after his departure. I felt as happy as a man who was unexpectedly freed from some dreadful vision that had haunted him a long time. I felt an unusual briskness and strength. Without any long deliberation I put on an overcoat, took my hat, and left the room. I went slowly downstairs, knocked at the janitor's

window, had the door opened, and walked into the street.

It was a clear autumn night. The pensive moon, lightly veiled in thin mist, hovered above Petřín, and in its silvery beams the moist pavement glittered like the surface of a lake curled by a gentle breeze. Now and then I felt the breath of a cold north wind. As the wind was blowing directly against my face, I hastened my pace, and in about a quarter of an hour I stood before the grated entrance of the Kinský park. The main gate and the side doors were wide open; and an old porter, an old acquaintance of mine, dressed in a fur coat, as though it were mid-winter, was impatiently walking up and down.

"Are there many guests to-night?" I asked the porter.

"Yes, sir," he murmured in answer.

"Is it long since the celebration began?"

"Possibly; but I am not sure. About half an hour ago Frederic, the young gentleman, rode out and has just returned."

"What do they celebrate?"

"I do not know; but the young gentleman whom they thought dead came back, and undoubtedly it is in his honor."

"Really?" I whispered unwillingly; and now was I first fully convinced that all I had

shortly before witnessed in my study was no delusion, but reality.

"I may go upstairs, may I?" I asked formally, knowing beforehand that the old porter would let me in, even if he had an express order not to admit any uninvited guest.

"Why, you are in the first place on my list of guests," he answered.

"Good-by, then," I said, and walked up the broad gravel drive.

The cold of the autumnal nights had left evident traces of its implacable destructive power in the park. The leaves of trees and bushes were yellow, and had mostly fallen. Here and there a tree stretched out perfectly bare branches. The dead silence of the night was broken only now and then by a blast of the cold north wind. I hurried on and soon saw the palace, about five hundred paces before me.

All the windows were lighted; in front of the villa I saw dark figures coming and going, and farther on stood a long row of carriages. A little later I heard low sounds of music, evidently coming from the villa. What kind of music it was I could not exactly tell; but it seemed to be rather melancholy, sad as a funeral march.

In a few moments, however, the music became silent, and I heard nothing but the

scraping of the gravel under my feet. I hastened still more. The nearer I came to the palace the fewer dark personages I saw before it, and when I finally stopped directly in front of the villa all was as still and quiet as if the palace had been uninhabited. At some other time this would have seemed strange to me; but now, remembering that I was coming to a special celebration, given in honor of an *escamoteur* who, after many years of study, desired to surprise his guests with an extraordinary performance, I did not wonder even when on entering the foyer I found myself in utter darkness. I only looked back on hearing the clapping of a large door; but I judged that all this was done only to strengthen the effect.

I stopped and waited to see what would happen next; but deep silence and darkness reigned all around. After some time, after my eyes, coming suddenly from moonlight into darkness, had become adapted to the dark, I noticed a streak of light a few paces before me. Coming nearer, I found that it was due to the moonlight penetrating through the half-open door from an adjoining room.

I opened the door wide and entered. The room was vacant and without any furniture; and though I had not been in the castle for a

long time I recollected that that room used to serve as an antechamber to the corridor leading to the main hall, where all greater banquets were usually held. I also remembered that this was the usual way to the main hall whenever a person did not wish to enter through the chief entrance. Knowing which way to go, I stepped to the window, through which the moonlight was pouring in, and near which there was a secret tapestried door leading to the corridor. Without any difficulty I found a small knob in the wall, — a secret spring, — and pressing the knob I opened the door, as I had often done in the past.

I saw before me a long vaulted corridor devoid of all ornaments. The moon shone faintly in through some windows, and there was light enough to enable one to see that the corridor was empty. The moonlight was so sharply reflected from the snowy walls and partly from the floor, paved with smooth, alternately white and black diamond-shaped stones, that I could tell every cloud that passed over the moon.

I entered the corridor; but to my astonishment a peculiar cold blew on me, as though it were open at the other end. I went on through it until I came to a point where it joined another corridor at a right angle.

This second corridor was empty, too. I went through that, and coming to a third corridor I thought I came to the entrance to the main hall. But in place of the door through which I had in past years so often entered the hall unnoticed, I found merely a bare wall. I went on, therefore, to the corner; but here I discovered a fourth corridor, forming a right angle with the third.

Doubtless during the few years since I had visited the palace many changes had taken place. The location of the corridors must have been altered, and the entrance to the hall destroyed or removed. I went through the fourth corridor, but found no door, no exit. At the same time I discovered that the corridors through which I had gone formed a rectangular parallelogram. Thus, from the fourth corridor I passed into the first. Judging by the light, I thought I was in the corridor which I entered from the ante-chamber; but I could not find the door again through which I came, and which had been mysteriously shut behind me. For several minutes I searched for a door in the walls, but in vain. I wondered how all this was possible, and finally I became convinced that I was in a series of corridors from which there could be no escape until my friend should think it best to utter his magical "*Efetta!*"

I must confess that I was surprised by this introduction into these arts. To entice a man in the night from his home, under a pretext that he is to come to a banquet, to lead him into a palace, let him enter through an open gate, and then decoy him into a labyrinth of corridors, — this was as difficult an experiment as it was original.

“ Well, let us wait till the adroit magician thinks fit to release us from the prison,” was my resolution; and I quietly walked up and down the four corridors until I found myself again at the point whence I had started. At times I would stop and listen; but I heard nothing but the wind, which finally became silent, and a mysterious stillness, interrupted only by the hollow echo of my steps, overspread the corridors.

At first I was perfectly quiet; but after about half an hour had passed I began to be a little impatient. Several times I shouted my friend's name; but in answer I merely heard an echo of my own voice.

Walking through the corridors at a constantly growing pace, I warmed myself a little; I felt the cold the more acutely when I slackened my pace or stopped. I had to walk faster and faster. In the true sense of the word I ran through all the corridors, stopping at that point where I supposed the

door was by which I had entered. For a while I searched for the door; but the cold drove me on. My anxiety increased. It seemed to me that I had been wandering through the corridors fully three hours. Every minute was almost an hour to me. I stamped, clapped, and shouted; but the stillness was unbroken. And whenever I stopped, the mysterious cold forced me on. Again I ran; I felt that my blood boiled — that the sweat was running down my face; but a mysterious power urged me on. I saw nothing before me but a dark corridor, seemingly growing narrower, and I began to doubt whether all this were real. But immediately I remembered that I saw the castle illuminated, that I spoke to the porter, and heard the music; in a word, that all this must be a reality, . . . and yet I could not comprehend why I heard only the hollow echo of my own steps and words, as though I were in an uninhabited palace. “Thus,” I thought, “thus fares a man who, staggering from one error into another, is in vain looking for firm ground; thus arises the chaos of divergent notions and ideas which usually precedes that awful state of mind known as — insanity.”

This thought suddenly arose in my mind, and instantly made my blood rise to my

head. An involuntary cry escaped me; I tottered; my heavy legs ceased moving; I fell to the floor. Darkness spread over my soul.

But lo! what is that?

Does it not seem to me as though I were listening to gentle sounds of music, and as though a clear stream of light had flitted before me? I rub my eyes and try to get up. In a few moments I succeed.

I see that I am standing in an arched corridor; there is a door, only half shut, in front of me, and a stream of light comes in through the opening. I really hear music. I advance staggering toward the door. Through the opening I look into a brightly illuminated hall. But my eyes are so dim that I cannot distinguish anything in the hall. But my consciousness is returning. I try to advance, but I stagger again, and have to lean against the wall. In that position I remain about five minutes; then I open the door a little more and glance into the hall.

I then first became fully satisfied that I was standing at the secret door so well known to me, and that the music I heard was coming from the hall, where I saw a considerable number of guests. But how it could have happened that I had wandered for about

three hours, as it seemed to me, in the simplest labyrinth of four corridors forming a regular parallelogram, that I had been unable to find the door which was so near, — this I could not explain. At that time, however, I did not trouble myself about solving the enigma; my unusual excitement had not yet ceased, and I was curious, too, to learn who was in the hall and what would happen next. Putting off my overcoat and throwing aside my hat, I slipped through the door and remained standing on the sill, leaning against the doorposts.

The large, high hall was splendidly decorated, and illuminated with numberless lights, so that a person could find a grain of poppy-seed on the floor. The first look convinced me that there was a large and rare company assembled, but a company of men only.

There may have been about two hundred persons in the hall. They sat at tables which were so arranged in a half-circle that a person could easily walk around each table, and from each one could see a black curtain, reaching from the ceiling to the floor, and dividing off a part of the hall. A number of servants were waiting on the guests; others were busy bringing the most varied meats and drinks on silver plates. I was unable to discover where the band of music

was placed, but I heard distinctly the soft sounds of a melancholy piece. The band was undoubtedly either in a recess or in some adjoining room. The hall was full of a gentle noise; I heard the murmur of the guests and the half-stifled calls of the lackeys; but to me all this was one unintelligible rustle, as when a distant waterfall disturbs the silence of the night.

No one seemed to notice me at first, and I was at full liberty to observe the guests. Though I did not know, except by name, a great many of the prominent citizens of Prague, yet I soon found out that the company assembled was a choice one.

Recollecting that the Kinskýs were coöperating with the father of my friend, I was not surprised to see a number of noblemen at one or two of the tables. I recognized one of the Princes Lobkovic, two Waldštýns, a Count of Thurn and Taxis, two Kaunices, the old Count Hanuš, of Kolovrat, the Rohans, etc.,—noblemen nearly all of whom had frequently been guests of the Kinskýs in the past. All these, and others whose names I did not know, were seated at one end of the half-circle of tables.

Neither was I surprised to find, at the opposite end of the half-circle, Prince Schwarzenberg, the Archbishop of Prague, two can-

ons, the Abbot of Strahov, the generals of the Knights of the Cross and of the Maltese order, the Provost of Vyšehrad, and other ecclesiastical dignitaries; at the next table I saw the parsons of St. Nicholas and of Smíchov, and several other divines whom I did not know.

Next to the tables of the noblemen there were two or three tables where civil and military officers, Bohemian and German deputies, and governmental and city officials of various sorts were sitting. Then followed other guests, whom I classed as *savants* and university professors; for I had recognized some of my former teachers among them.

In the Bohemian literary world I knew — at that time — only Pfleger, who was related to my friend, and our beloved poet, Neruda, who had been my teacher and my friend's. Both of them, and many others, I found among the guests, engaged in lively discourse.

Our friends who failed to come to the inn when I invited them were also present, and sat at a table near by that of the men of letters.

I might perhaps have recognized many other prominent personages had I not been interrupted in my observations: one of the lackeys, passing by, stopped before me. I recognized an old acquaintance of my early

years, when I used to be almost an every-day guest in the castle or in the park.

"Come at last!" he said, in a low voice; and his gray, deep-set little eyes glittered with a peculiar flame. "I must instantly announce that you have arrived. Please step down into the hall, and take a seat at the middle table." He pointed to the table where our friends were seated.

"Why at that table, exactly?" I asked.

"Because it has been so ordered," answered the poor fellow, who had been doing nothing else during all his life but obeying orders.

"But why?"

"I do not know, and I need not know. But it cannot be otherwise. Look how the guests are seated: There noblemen sit in a group; opposite them are the divines; here are the officials, and so forth. 'Each to his fellows,' was our motto. Thus there are seated in separate groups the physicians, lawyers, philosophers, architects, sculptors, actors, opera singers, painters, musicians, authors, and so on; even the people that have no calling are seated together."

"But why all this? No such ceremonies have ever been observed here," I remarked.

"They *were* not, that is true; this time,

however, it has been so ordered," the lackey retorted. "Please," he added, in the pleading tone in which only a nobleman's servant knows how to beg without expressing his request in words. While speaking, he pointed again to the table where my friends were sitting.

"Well, I shall obey the order and take my seat accordingly, to spare you trouble," I said, softened, and walked to the table assigned me, while the lackey went through the hall and quickly disappeared through the main entrance.

The guests paid little or no attention to me. Some turned their heads; others glanced at me; but not having seen me coming in by the main door, they probably thought that I had left the table before and was now returning. Some shook hands with me; others greeted me with a kind smile or a bow of the head.

But before I sat down the gentle music had changed into a deafening *fanfare*. A few moments later the flourish ceased, a greater part of the lights were turned out, and as the black curtain was being drawn we heard a sonorous voice saying:

"The performance begins!"

The eyes of all present were fixed upon the curtain. When the curtain was fully drawn

I beheld a platform covered with a black cloth. On the platform stood a low catafalque, supporting a metallic coffin. Around the coffin there was a multitude of beautiful exotic flowers. Large candles were burning on both sides of the coffin. At its head there lay a large laurel-wreath; farther down was an officer's hat and sabre; and at the foot, in front, was this simple epitaph:

FREDERIC WÜNSCHER,

IMP. ROYAL FIRST LIEUTENANT.

BORN ON THE 7TH OF JULY, 1841.

DIED ON THE 7TH OF JULY, 1866.

There was a general surprise.

A stillness so great that the least whisper could have been easily heard spread over the hall. After a few moments the silence was broken by sad, touching voices singing the well-known "Salve Regina," seemingly coming from afar, perhaps from some of the adjoining rooms.

No one spoke a word as long as the singing lasted. Even after the singing ceased and a dead stillness filled the hall again, no one moved or stirred. Doubtless for the moment there was no one in the hall except myself who was conscious that all this was

nothing more than an original opening of an *escamoteur's* performance.

The Archbishop rose first of all; evidently he was the most impatient. But at the same moment the lid of the coffin flew up with a din, and remained hanging in the air between the floor and the ceiling, just as they say the lid is hovering above Mohammed's coffin.

In the uncovered coffin I saw a dead body in the uniform of a military officer. Standing too far off, however, I could not distinctly see the features of the face.

The hall was still buried in silence.

First, after several minutes, one of the guests arose at the table where the physicians and men of science were seated. I at once recognized the expressive face of Dr. Sperlich, of Smíchov.

"Let us examine the body," he said, and walked briskly to the catafalque. His colleagues followed. Then the engineers and the architects arose, then others; the philosophers and the divines were the last. In a few moments the catafalque was surrounded by nearly all the guests. Only a few of the physicians stood close to the coffin — all the others looked on from a safe distance; hence it was not difficult for me to get near. Standing at the head of the corpse, I fastened my eyes upon the pale, set face.

It was the same face which I had seen at Nechanice after the battle of Königgrätz. Its likeness to the face of my friend was so striking that after looking awhile at the cold features I could not help believing that I saw his dead body.

Dr. Sperlich passed his hand over the forehead of the corpse, felt the pulse, unbuttoned the white jacket and the shirt, and declared that it really was an embalmed corpse that was lying in the coffin. Some of those standing nearest followed his example to test the truth of his words, and no one doubted it. I too put my hand upon the forehead; it was ice-cold. Bowing nearer to the face, I did not notice the least breath. The hand, too, was cold, and the half-uncovered bosom showed unmistakable signs of death.

In order to prove beyond any doubt that the body in the coffin was lifeless, Dr. Sperlich drew out a pocket-knife and thrust it into the chest of the corpse. The body was moved by the thrust, but otherwise remained unchanged. The guests could not comprehend this in any way. There was an exchange of opinion among some; others returned to their places. In five or six minutes there were not more than twenty persons remaining by the coffin. About to go back to my place, I looked once more at the corpse's face.

The rosy leaflet of an exotic plant lay on the rigid lips, and just as I fixed my eyes upon the face the leaflet shivered as though a feeble breath had touched it. I looked at the face more fixedly, and noticed that the eyebrows seemed to be trembling, and again the breast looked as though it had moved. At once I grasped the corpse's hand to see if my eyes were not deceived. The hand was no longer ice-cold, but warm; and it seemed to me as though its warmth were increasing. I was about to call Dr. Sperlich's attention to the sudden change, but before I could do so the eyes of the corpse slowly opened and closed again. A slight cry escaped my lips. Some of those standing nearest came still nearer; but in a moment all stepped back in amazement. The corpse moved, or rather shook convulsively, as though an electrical current had suddenly gone through it; and I distinctly perceived the symptoms of returning animal life.

About three minutes later the head moved, then both hands, and in a few moments the whole body was in motion. The corpse sat up with difficulty and remained awhile in that position; then it fell back into the coffin, then rose and sat up again. The surprise of those present grew into awe.

Whatever may have been the effect of the unexpected occurrence upon this or that one of the guests, it was certain that there was no one who was not amazed in the highest degree. Evidently no one thought that the performance of an *escamoteur* would be opened in such an original way. All eagerly wondered what would come next.

After the corpse sat up in the coffin, a general silence prevailed. Not a finger stirred; all eyes were bent upon the wonderful automaton which the experts had just pronounced to be an embalmed corpse.

And now the corpse gave further signs of life! True, it sat motionless for some time, but its eyes glistened. Then it moved its head, and looked around as though it were seeking some one; then it nodded as if satisfied; a light smile passed over its face; the mouth opened and spoke: "*De mortuis nil nisi bene!*"

How strange! All that had been going on before the eyes of the guests until now failed to elicit one single word of admiration or surprise. The sound of the human voice drew out the first response, and stormy applause rang through the hall, accompanied by shouts of "Bravo!" "Well done!"

At the same time all the lights went out suddenly; utter darkness filled the hall. A

few moments later, however, the lights were lighted again; but instead of the catafalque, the coffin, and the animated corpse, there appeared before our eyes a simple writing-desk and a chair, and behind the desk there stood my friend in an elegant black dress.

Again a long roar of applause filled the hall, and everybody shouted, "Very good!" or "Bravo!"

After the stormy manifestations of approval had subsided, my friend addressed the guests:

"You will excuse, gentlemen, this unusual way of opening my performance; but as I have begun, so shall I finish it; only between the acts permit me to say a few words which may interest some of you. You see a man before you whose brain is not his own, but — another's."

Then with his right hand my friend grasped the top of his head, and, as easily as if he were taking off his cap, he took off the upper part of his skull, and holding it awhile in his hand advanced a few steps to the foreground.

"Nearly all that I am going to tell you now will seem improbable," he said, "but any of the *savants* present may convince himself of its truth. Allow me!"

Stepping down into the half-circle of guests, he seated himself on a chair and continued:

“Let some one who knows anatomy and physiology examine my brain!”

At these words, some of the guests at the professors' table arose, surrounded my friend, and began to examine. One of them undertook an oral explanation:

“Truly, so it is! We really see the skull pared off and the surface of the brain. The surface shows quite normal convolutions. Under a microscope some of them might, perhaps, show some differences in size and form, but now we can only see a common surface. We see plainly also the well-known gray matter, composed of nerve-cells and deposited all along the surface in small convolutions; and, for the benefit of laymen, I add that modern physiologists designate this gray matter as the seat of consciousness, thought, talent, and recollection. More I do not pretend to say.”

“It will be my turn now,” my friend remarked, as he put the skull on his head and slowly walked back to his desk.

“The brain which one of my esteemed guests has just examined,” said my friend, opening his preliminary explanations, “is not, as I have mentioned, my own, but another's. I borrowed it for the same purpose for which millions of others have for ages been borrowing the most precious results of

the activity of other people's brains — their ideas; for it is easier to think with another's brain, to boast of another man's ideas, and to benefit thus oneself and others, than to hammer out an idea in one's own brain. I had long been thinking which brain would be the most suitable, and finally I decided to try the brain of a man whom the whole civilized world classes among its most acute thinkers. I knew that the brain of that man was preserved in the British Museum; by stratagem I succeeded in securing this invaluable treasure; and when, after the battle of Königgrätz, the longed-for opportunity came, and my own skull was cut off by a sabre, I replaced my brain with that of Newton."

"That is an impossibility!" was shouted at the table of the physicians, anatomists, and physiologists.

"An absurdity!" said the lawyers.

"Nonsense!" concluded the philosophers.

"A godless blasphemy!" sounded indignantly from the theologians' table.

This many-sided expression of displeasure failed to embarrass my friend. He must have expected it; and he went on quietly:

"I beg your pardon, my esteemed friends. Every one judges after his own fashion; every one perceives, qualifies, and names various conceptions and objects in the way

he has learned and acquired, and as he likes. Different opinions and different names do not change the things themselves in the least; they remain such as they are in fact."

This sophistical turn apparently allayed the resentment of most of the guests, but convinced no one. Accordingly it was not surprising to hear new shouts from among the crowd:

"A proof! We want a conclusive proof."

"A conclusive proof" — my friend resumed his talk — "is something that I am unable to offer at this moment, just as none of us can furnish unanswerable proofs of the most ingenious hypothesis of all ages — Newton's law of universal gravitation. I must, therefore, ask my honored guests to accept my views, as those often do who, disregarding proof, rely always on their own conviction, so-called.

"Let us suppose, my honored guests, that my brain has really been supplanted by the brain of Newton.

"I suppose," my friend continued, "that every one of us will concede that the human brain has always been made of the same material, that ages ago it was composed of the same parts, that its actions were governed by the same laws, that its surface was composed of the same convolutions, and that

ages ago, even, there was deposited in these convolutions that wonderful gray matter, surrounded with white matter and composed of nerve-cells, which modern physiologists designate as the seat of thought, reason, judgment, and talent. The chief organ of thinking and of talent is, therefore, the same. But what are its functions? Why do they differ so substantially from the working of that same organ in the past? Why is it that there do not arise in the brains of our age thoughts like those that originated in the brains of Homer, Sophocles, Æschylus, Euripides, Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Dante, Milton, Petrarch, Tasso, Calderon, Molière, Voltaire, Rousseau, and others? Where are the brains which gave birth to the wonderful works which have been left to us by Michael Angelo, Rafael Sanzio, Rubens, Titian, Murillo, Leonardo da Vinci, Van Dyke, Rembrandt, Hogarth, Salvator Rosa, Ostade, Ruysdael, or even by our own Škreta and Brandl?¹ Where are the brains to be found to-day which marked the long array of ingenious sculptors beginning with Phidias, Skopas, and Praxiteles? Where are the brains which constructed plans of magnificent domes, palaces, pantheons? Where are the brains of Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn?

¹ Karel Škreta and Petr Brandl, two noted Bohemian artists.

Where are the brains of the Garricks, Keans, Talmas, Rachels? And if we live in the age of progress, what shows that progress?

“The object of my discourse will be plainly seen after my final experiment.

“The mysterious gray matter of the human brain, which our physiologists look upon as the source of thought and the home of mental abilities, still remains the same in substance. Ideas spring from it, and human talents are hidden in it. For this reason, notwithstanding all the difference of ideas and faculties, the unknown laws which govern this mysterious process remain forever the same; in a word, logic is one and eternal. Who knows whether the brain of some farmer, mechanic, servant, or slave, long forgotten, if shaped under the same circumstances, laboring in the same direction, under like conditions, as the brain of Newton, — who knows whether that brain would not have reached the same conclusions, or perhaps grander results, and much sooner, than the brain of Newton?”

“No one will dispute a sentence so conditioned,” came from an unknown voice at the authors’ table.

“Why, then, that absurd worship of the so-called geniuses, when it is known that the same conditions under which this or that cel-

celebrated deed or work was done exist with thousands of others who do not even attempt performance?"

"Bravo!" "Bravo!" the noblemen applauded.

"But why, too, that still more absurd worship of men without any talent who have become famous only through the genius of others, hired and paid?"

There was heard a suppressed murmur of disapproval from the table of the noblemen and officials; but my friend went on:

"Why worship one's own genius, one's own deeds, one's own age? Why those eternal eulogies on the age of enlightenment and progress, when we are still so far from the true universal enlightenment, when we know that all that the human mind has achieved in the course of ages may be abused? Is not a modern workingman, attending a machine, still the same slave as ever? Is his life any more pleasant, safer, or happier than it used to be? Do we not know that all the sciences, from mathematics (the queen) down to the last, often charlatanical pseudo-science, — do we not know that all achievements, old and new, are alike employed in the mutual killing of men? The progress of modern strategy and military tactics shows that all newly discovered

means of communication are used to convey large armies in the shortest time to places where they may engage in reciprocal slaughter. Mathematics, chemistry, optics, mechanics, and a series of other sciences furnish their latest and best productions to subserve that purpose. Ay, even history, dealing with mere facts, and pedagogy, pointing to models, have oftentimes the same object. What is the model heroism of which the historian speaks, what this modern drill, — these army orders, — but the refined means which stimulate human souls to a passionate, furious, and often useless battle? ”

The military men fell in line with, “ Don’t insult your vocation ! ” and from the rear a deep voice asked :

“ How is all this connected with the experiment? ”

“ Very simply,” my friend replied. “ My experiment is based on a scientific hypothesis.”

“ Well, why don’t you take up your experiment? ” the same unknown voice suggested.

“ Go on with the lecture ! ” came from the tables to the right.

“ No, no ! The experiment ! We want the experiment ! ” came from the left.

“ Speak, speak ! ” urged the centre.

Such a noise and din arose in the hall that for a time not a word could be understood. Strange as it may seem, persons whose profession led them to frequent public speech-making — the divines, legislators, and professors — showed the greatest impatience in calling for the experiment; whereas people who seldom tried to deliver a lecture in public — such as artists, architects, soldiers, etc. — evinced an especial willingness to listen to my friend's rhapsodical discourse.

"My esteemed guests are separated into two camps," he began, after the noise had subsided a little. "As a wretched artist, desiring to please all who appreciate my art, I cannot at present satisfy either party, for I do not know which possesses the keener appreciation of my performance. There remains nothing for me but to satisfy both; therefore I ask your permission to finish my talk, and then the experiment shall immediately follow."

"Very well!" all cried on the right, on the left, and in the centre; and my friend resumed:

"The modern man's proud boast of progress is really pitiable. It seems that a moment's success, often questionable, of some ingenious head dazzles a thousand others with a false vision of an amazing progress;

and yet man's powerlessness appears daily in a more and more intensive light. Early in our youth our teachers told us that the human sight was feebler than that of the eagle or the falcon; that man's hearing, smell, touch, and other senses were duller than those of many animals. Man has known this long; hence his dreadful chase after some means to sharpen his senses. He strengthened them artificially, to be the more convinced how powerless, miserable, and wretched a being he is. He took a dissecting-knife, found and classified his organs, endeavored to find out their functions, established their importance and necessity, and became convinced that the life of the master of all creation, created 'in God's own image,' did not and does not substantially differ from the life of the most subordinate creatures. He has traced the operations of his mind; but the boundary line between good and evil he has not yet defined exactly. He has penetrated deeply into the universe, and has endeavored to ascertain the laws of the world; but he has been unable to repel the awful truth that merciless death and oblivion are awaiting him. Be born, live, and suffer; then perish, crumble into atoms, and vanish forever — such is the horrible prospective which the progress of science opens to man.

To feign ignorance, to console oneself with illusions and Utopian fiction, does not help any, and is cowardly. Yet how do we regard human life in view of this horrible truth? Do we put a just value upon it? Which of us can step forward and show that a single life he has destroyed ever revived? Still we look on at fearful mutual murders—quick by means of force, or slow by means of enervating toil and suffering.”

My friend paused as though he were going to rest for a time. Not the least whisper disturbed the dead stillness. It was evident that the speaker tried to suppress his thoughts rather than give them free play; and for this very reason his discourse made a favorable impression upon those present.

After a few moments he proceeded:

“Neither I nor anybody else could return life to a dead body. All my art is based on quickness; and in everything I rely upon the relative slowness of thought. It is generally supposed that there is nothing faster than thought. This is a mistaken notion. Figures—those cold, merciless, but most sincere friends of reasoning—have proved the contrary. It has been ascertained that compared with the velocity of light and electricity the velocity of thought is astonishingly small. If I touch the skin of an adult’s

leg, it takes no less than about one-third of a second before the sensation is reported by the spinal cord to the brain—the central organ of consciousness; whereas in the same time light will travel over more than fourteen thousand geographical miles; electricity, conducted by a copper wire, nearly thirty-one thousand miles. Just as slowly as the sensation of touch passes through the spine, every notion evidently passes through the brain.”

Again he paused.

I must confess that up to this time I had no idea what kind of an experiment he was going to perform. His disconnected talk excited my curiosity; but mentally I had already joined those who asked for an immediate performance of the experiment. Notwithstanding this, I was unwilling to interrupt, and so kept silence.

“Along with all his other knowledge the modern man also knows how to declaim beautifully upon immortality, although he realizes too well that his final, inevitable lot is oblivion. Truly he has ever been and is endeavoring with all his power to save a picture of himself or a scene for his descendants; but art in all its phases has proved unable to do more than preserve a mere shadow of a picture—a shadow that fades

and vanishes until it disappears entirely and forever, just like the original. I have been thinking about it several years; and aided by all the discoveries of science that were accessible to me I have become able to present vividly to human eyes any scene that existed hundreds or even thousands of years ago."

"What?" "What?" was heard on all sides.

Curiosity, which my friend evidently aimed to awaken by his speech, was universal. But he went on:

"If before the invention of glass and the telescope anybody should have appeared before a learned body of men like the present, and claimed that by means of certain instruments it would sometime become possible to look out over distances of many miles, even to study heavenly bodies, his story surely would have been listened to with distrust even by the most profound thinker of the time. The same would have happened if before the invention of the steam-engine or the telegraph any one should have claimed that a journey of several months might be made in a few hours, or that one might in a moment's time hear from a person hundreds of miles away. To-day we should compassionately smile at the sceptics; yet I am sure that I shall not be believed if I make an

analogous assertion before my experiment is finished. For I have succeeded in discovering an alloy out of which a tool may be made which excels the most perfect microscopes and telescopes of to-day, although it looks just like ordinary eyeglasses. These eyeglasses enable a person clearly to distinguish things at enormous distances—a *milliard* of miles, for example.”

“That is impossible!” “A fairy tale!” came from various parts of the hall.

“Considering what I have said,” my friend continued, “I had to expect that I should not be believed. It is the same as if half a thousand years ago I should have asserted what has since been conclusively proved—that the earth moves around the sun. I am not at all surprised, therefore, that my esteemed guests think it impossible that I should have invented a better instrument than all our telescopes, and an incredibly simple one at that. But this is not all. For I have made another invention more improbable than the first. In truth, it is no new invention, for it has been known for ages; but its application is wholly modern. Its simplicity will surprise every one; but he who recalls the fact that the results of all human thinking may be summed up in a few words, who knows that the apparent chaos of the universe and all its millions of

natural forces are governed by one law, — he will at least understand how for a given purpose we may use the resultant of only a few forces. I have succeeded in inventing, or utilizing rather, a precious motor that has been known for ages — a motor whose velocity exceeds that of light — ay, even that of electricity.”

“A Utopian idea!” some of the guests exclaimed.

“Yet I shall prove it,” my friend went on, “for I have constructed a machine to test the effects of this wonderful force; the machine, ready for the most daring experiments, is here, and any one may convince himself of the truth of my words.”

My friend looked up. I noticed that a large regular triangle was hanging in the air where the metallic coffin-lid had been before. One corner of the triangle pointed to the ceiling; the opposite side was in a horizontal position. The triangle was so large that two persons could comfortably stand in it. I could not tell of what material it was made. It looked as though it were made of bright, strong wire; all three sides glittered as if rays of light were reflected from a smooth wire.

Before I could examine the machine from afar, my friend simply beckoned, and the

triangle instantly slipped down upon the table. And look! First now I noticed that at its two lower corners there were hanging two glittering objects which I failed to see before. My friend put both of these upon the table and said:

“Let any one who wants to convince himself come forward and examine my apparatus.”

The guests surrounded the table. I too, being exceedingly curious, hastened forward and struggled to get as near as possible to the table, so that I could view the instruments closely. I saw two pairs of eyeglasses, seemingly common glass. I looked through them, but found nothing peculiar. They seemed to be common unpolished glass. The triangular instrument was more peculiar. What from a distance seemed to be a bright thick wire was an unknown, thin, cobwebby matter, as tough as a wire and glittering; its resemblance to a thick wire was evidently an optical delusion. I, and many of the guests, examined the machine with our own eyes and our own touch.

A few minutes later my friend politely asked the guests to resume their seats. Then he proceeded:

“By way of introduction I shall give a few well-known facts concerning the velocity

of light. The speed of my machine will then be better understood. As is well known, the velocity of light is computed to be more than forty-two thousand geographical miles a second.¹ A ray of moonlight, therefore, reaches the earth in about a second and a half; sunlight arrives in about eight minutes. The light of Neptune, the farthest-known planet, needs nearly three hours to reach the earth. The nearest fixed star is four billion miles distant from us; it takes no less than three thousand two hundred years before we see its light. The distance of the fixed stars of the twelfth magnitude, according to Struve, is about five billion miles, and their light comes to us in four thousand years. And Rosse's gigantic telescope discovered stars so remote that their light reaches us only in about thirty million years. Accordingly the so-called universe must be at least thirty million years old. All this is well known, however. I merely state it to prove my assertion. If by means of polished glasses we are enabled to view bodies so distant, why should we not, by means of a far more perfect instrument, look, say, from a fixed star of the twelfth magnitude at the earth and see everything

[¹ It will be noted that the astronomical "facts" as well as the mathematics of the *escamoteur* are inaccurate. — THE EDITORS.]

as distinctly as a naked eye sees even minute objects at a distance of ten or twelve inches?"

"Humbug!" burst from some one in the rear.

A light smile passed over my friend's face; so smiles a man who is sure of victory.

"Any one may doubt all I have said until I prove its truth," he went on. "But certainly every one will admit that if it were possible for us in one hour to make a journey of five billion miles from a star of the twelfth magnitude to our earth, and were our eyes strengthened as I have mentioned, we could in as short a time view scenes from the whole of mankind's history, beginning with the first man down to this very moment. This, too, every one will admit: that if the traveller desired to view a scene longer, he would have to fly with the same velocity and in the same direction as light does. Now, if we should soar up from this hall and fly with the velocity of light, we should see continually the very scene that is now before our eyes. But if we should suddenly be transferred to a point distant a little over 3,225,000,000 miles from the earth, and should then speed on with the velocity of light, the earth would appear to us as it looked twenty-four hours ago. If we should then suddenly advance ten, a hundred, or a thousand times as far, we should

see what had happened on earth ten, a hundred, or a thousand days ago, and so on. The course of our flight of course would not be direct or arbitrary: it would be a gigantic cycloid, so as to follow not only the earth's rotation around its axis, but also its course around the sun. Of all the scenes that have taken place on the face of the globe, not a single one has been lost, but images of all are being preserved in the great mirror of the universe. By means of enormous speed all these images may be traced, looked at, and examined at will. I have invented the instruments necessary for this journey, and although they may surprise everybody by their unparalleled simplicity, they have been so often successfully tested that I can to-night invite any one of the company to undertake with me an expedition into the universe."

Loud laughter, expressive partly of distrust, partly of ridicule, shook the hall. "A Utopian scheme!" "A hypothesis!" "Nonsense!" Such and similar cries came from various parts of the room. After the laughter had somewhat subsided, the same grumbler in the rear who had interrupted my friend shortly before remarked:

"Jules Verne is ahead of you, for he undertook a like journey to the moon."

A light smile again passed over my friend's face.

"You are right," he said, "but only partly so; for even Jules Verne was not the first to undertake so adventurous a journey. Edgar Allan Poe went on a like journey about a quarter of a century before him; and so did one Cyrano de Bergerac in the seventeenth century. The course of the journey is the same, but the means and the object are different. All of those who have undertaken the journey before have employed complicated apparatus, and have intended to amuse and to instruct; but I use the simplest means, and the object of my journey is" —

"We don't care what it is!" the morose guest in the rear interjected. "We want proof that such an excursion is feasible!"

"I shall furnish the proof immediately," my friend answered. "Let any one who chooses take a slip of paper and write down what event of history he wants to see; then let a delegate be chosen who shall undertake the journey with me as a manager of the machine."

My friend gave a sign with his hand, and the machine flew up several times, and again slipped noiselessly down upon the table. Its movements were so rapid that it was impossible to count them. This showed

that the machine was really something wonderful.

Thereupon there was a moderate commotion in the hall. Some of the guests, served with small slips of paper by the valets, wrote what events they wished to see; others stood in groups and talked; while my friend quietly waited at his table until all should be ready.

Like the rest, I too was fully convinced that a real performance of this fantastic excursion into the universe could not even be thought of; yet I was eager to see how my friend would proceed. Positive that the experiment could not be performed save by means of an optical delusion, I was the more curious to see how he would delude the senses of so choice a company, and whether he would succeed in deceiving me too.

After the notes had been written and put on the table, he resumed:

"You will please choose your delegate. The journey is a daring one; your delegate will stand in the triangle with me, and so we shall start up."

"Why should we choose? Let us give preference to volunteers," said the Archbishop.

"Who will volunteer?" asked my friend.

No one replied. The silence of the grave prevailed.

"Now you have the opportunity to examine the whole thing with your own senses," I said to myself; and as my friend repeated his question I rose and slowly walked to his table. A placid smile passed across his lips as he saw that I was the volunteer; and when I came to his desk he said:

"My esteemed guests, the gentleman who is willing to go on the excursion is a friend of mine. If I do not wish to be considered a charlatan who performs his experiments with the aid of his secret allies, I cannot then accept his services unless you expressly declare that you accept him as your delegate."

All fastened their searching eyes on me; it seemed to me as though each guest tried to read in my face whether I deserved to be trusted. Then some one in the centre suggested:

"We cannot do otherwise, as no one else has applied. After all, the main thing is proof; and our delegate must prove the trustworthiness of his report."

"Exactly so!" came from the tables to the right.

"We are satisfied," came from the left.

"I am willing," I said, with some hesitation, "to furnish not only a faithful account of what I shall see, but also proof — if possible."

"First of all," my friend resumed, "permit me to arrange the papers chronologically."

Then he began to arrange them rapidly. Standing close to his table, I could in many cases easily read what was written on this or that slip. There were over four hundred slips. Evidently many wrote more than one note. He showed such skill in arranging them that it took him only about five minutes.

"The first event," he then said to the guests, "which, according to the written notes, is to be seen anew, happened one hundred and nineteen days ago. If, therefore, we wish once more to see it as it is mirrored in the universe, we must first make a long journey, such as light has made in one hundred and nineteen days; then we shall for a moment regard the scene. If we wish to look longer, we must speed on with the velocity of light. In this case our first task will be to get ahead of the light. As light travels over 42,000 miles in a second, it makes 2,520,000 miles in a minute, about 3,629,000,000 miles in a day, and more than 431,851,000,000 miles in one hundred and nineteen days. With my machine we shall reach that distance in a moment, and then we shall fly on, either with the velocity of light or a little faster, in a gigantic spiral answering to the rotation of

the earth both around its axis and around the sun."

He pushed the table a little forward, and his triangle slid down to the ground without any noise. Then he put on a pair of the wonderful spectacles and entered the triangle. I followed his example.

Silence prevailed in the hall. No one stirred; evidently every one expected with eagerness what would follow. Suddenly it occurred to me that it would be impossible to break through the ceiling with the machine. I looked up toward the ceiling, and lo! I saw a large round aperture, through which I saw the sky and some groups of stars. Before I asked for an explanation of this strange change, which I had not noticed before, I heard a clear clink, as though some one had struck a silvery bell; and instantly it seemed to me that we were flying up. I say expressly that it *seemed* to me; for the scene in the hall was constantly before me.

"Do we fly, or do we not?" I inquired of my friend, who, holding the guests' notes in one hand, was managing the machine with the other.

"We do fly," was his answer. "We have only the velocity of light now, and consequently you see the same scene you saw before we started. In a few seconds I shall

so direct the machine that we shall suddenly find ourselves 431,851,000,000 miles away from the earth, whereupon we shall fly for some time with the velocity of light merely."

"All right," I said.

The scene before me grew misty. Soon I saw nothing but gray dusk passing into darkness, until there was impenetrable darkness before me.

"How is it that I do not see anything?" I inquire of my friend.

"We are as far from the earth," says my friend, "as light has travelled in one hundred and nineteen days. From a distance of more than 431,851,000,000 miles you see now the region where the event happened one hundred and nineteen days ago in the night. We fly on with the velocity of light. A light pressure on the mainspring of my machine will, however, suffice to make us fly faster, and so the whole scene will gradually develop before your eyes."

I do not answer, for in the same moment it seems to me that darkness is changing into twilight with a reddish coloring. Now flames flash through the dusk, and now the landscape emerges. I see at first only indistinct outlines of mountains, woods, rivers, cities, and villages. Soon everything looks clearer. I distinguish single fields, highways,

farms, and houses; I see entire villages ablaze, and innumerable lesser lights scattered all over the region like will-o'-the-wisps. The scene grows still more distinct. I notice how dark shadows are hurrying in a wild disorder along the highways and over the fields. Soon I perceive that the shadows are numberless living beings. I recognize horsemen and wagons and foot-soldiers. I see how in some places groups or streams of men are fleeing in disorder, how in others they form immovable crowds. All this I see in the twilight of a summer night. The landscape gradually becomes more distinct. Near the burning villages I see swarms of men. Then I recognize the groups as camps of larger and smaller divisions of soldiery, or stations where the wounded are being cared for. I see places strewn with dead horses and men, with overturned wagons and cannons, and distinguish single individuals — some digging graves, others spying about, others, again, picking up the fallen men and carrying them to the camp-fires or to the graves.

In another moment I have a perfect bird's-eye view of an evening-clad landscape with a battlefield after battle. The scene extends several miles in width and length. Nearly a hundred towns and villages are before me,

and I seem to recognize some of them. But the strange image does not remain unchanged. The longer I look at it the brighter it becomes, and I see everything clearly as though I were looking down from a tower. It is a panorama of a battle, but the scenes follow one another in reversed order — from the end of the fight to its beginning. Thus I see successively images of soldiers fleeing and pursuing, then fighting, and later preparing for battle. Now there is a daring and bloody attack of a few regiments against a firm position of the enemy; then a wild combat of single regiments of horsemen, manœuvres of the infantry, movements of the artillery. At times I see only clouds of white smoke with occasional flashes of fire. The silence of the grave is spread over the entire scene. I do not hear the thunder of cannons, the rattle of drums and the clang of trumpets, the clashing of arms and the moans of the wounded. I see a vivid and horrible, but noiseless scene. Gradually the scene of a terrible battle is changing into a milder one, until I see a peaceful region in the lustre of the golden rays of a summer sun.

How strange! It took less time to survey the whole scene than it takes to read this description. The skill with which my friend had

deluded my eyes was indeed surprising, and I fully believed that his other experiments would be equally successful.

"I think I have seen an image of the battle of Königgrätz," I said to my friend, who, standing silently by me in the triangle, was engineering the machine.

"You are right," he replied; "now you will see all the battles of the Seven Days' war in a reverse order. I shall assist you with short explanations so that you can have more time to look."

"I am satisfied," I said, waiting quietly for what would follow. I did not have to wait long. The image of the peaceful region began to darken, and in a few seconds I had utter darkness before me again. I had hardly noticed the change when darkness began to yield to twilight, twilight to daylight, and I saw another battle — the battle of Königinhof. Then followed in rapid succession the battles of Trutnov, Skalitz, Náchod, Jičín, Podol, and many skirmishes and smaller engagements of the Austro-Prussian war.

"No less than 45,000 men were killed in seven days," remarked my friend.

"On!" I exclaimed; and in a moment the scene was changed. Again I saw scenes of battles from the Polish revolution and the Schleswig-Holstein war. Then followed the

terrible battle of Pueblo, and scenes from the French invasion of Mexico; further on the internecine battle of Fredericksburg and a series of battles and skirmishes of the American Civil war.

"The South American wars," my friend said, "took 519,000, the North American war 381,000, lives."

"On!" I urged; and in a moment I saw the battle of Aspremonte, the capture of Palermo, the slaughters of Solferino, Magenta, and a number of smaller battles; then scenes of dread and shame from the Hindoo revolution and equally bloody events of the Crimean war, from the last frightful attack on Sebastopol to the murderous battles of Balaklava and Inkerman.

"No less than 785,000 men was the cost of the Crimean war," my friend commented coolly.

"On, on!" I exclaimed; and instantly there was passing before my eyes scenes of street barricades following Napoleon's *coup d'état*, and scenes of dread and cruelty from the stormy years of 1849 and 1848, in a wonderful mass, and all in reversed chronological order.

The battlefields were scattered all over Europe. I saw the camp at Vilagos, the defeats of the Magyars, the bombardment

of Pesth, scenes from the Paris revolution of June, the capture of Ofen by the Magyars, the defeats of the Italians, and scenes from the Milan revolution.

I was going to speak; but my friend silenced me with a motion of his hand.

Other defeats of the Magyars followed; then the taking and the siege of Vienna, scenes from the Viennese revolution of October, from the Prague uprising of June and the bombardment of Prague by Windischgrätz, defeats of the Italians, scenes from the Paris revolution of February, and the stormy scenes from the revolutionary movements in Italy.

“And is it possible to count the victims of all these wars and battles?” my friend asked, when these images had disappeared and for a short time I beheld only quiet scenes of peace.

“Let us go on!” I urge, and soon I gaze upon scenes from the Polish revolution of 1846, and after a pause various scenes from the uprising of republicans in Paris, Toulon, and Grenoble in 1834, the capture of Warsaw by the Russian army in 1831, the Dresden tumults, and the battle of Ostrolenka.

While looking at this horrible fratricidal battle of the Slavs, I asked:

“How far are we from the earth?”

"About 46,000,000,000 miles," was his answer.

Thereupon I saw scenes from the Parisian revolution of July, the taking of Erivan by Paskievich, and the bloody battle of Missolonghi; then followed various scenes from the wars of independence on the Balkan Peninsula.

After a long pause again I saw a terrible battle.

"How far are we from the earth now?" I inquired.

"About 68,000,000,000 miles," said my friend; "you have just seen the battle of Waterloo."

While my friend was continuing his short explanations, I viewed the three days' carnage of Leipzig, the battles of Montmartre and Kulm, the remnant of the French army crossing the Berezina, the conflagration of Moscow, the battle of Borodino, the battle of Aspern, scenes from the revolutions of Peru and Mexico, and again scenes from Napoleon's wars — the slaughter of Austerlitz and the magnificent naval battle of Trafalgar.

"Is it possible to tell the number of the victims of the ambition of one despot — Napoleon?" my friend asked.

I did not answer.

We sped on. I saw the taking of Prague

by Suvarov; the fratricidal battle of Maciejowice, where Kosciusko fell down wounded with the exclamation, "*Finis Poloniæ!*" Then came the bloody scenes of the great French revolution, of the Polish insurrection, of the wars with the Turks; scenes from the American war of Independence; scenes from the Seven Years' war; a series of scenes from the fierce Northern war between the Russians and the Swedes; the battle of Narva; scenes from the Spanish war of Succession; the defeat of the Turks at Vienna by the Polish king Sobieski; and wars of the French with the Spanish and Dutch. I saw the battle of Dunbar, where Cromwell gained victory, and a series of battles down to that of Marston Moor, where ten thousand Royalists were killed. Intermixed with these battles were scenes from the Swedish invasion of Bohemia; then followed scenes of brutality from the Thirty Years' war; and finally the beheading of Bohemian patriots at Prague, and the battle of the White Mountain, of 1620, where the independence of Bohemia was crushed forever.

"How far are we from the earth now?" I inquired.

"About 325,000,000,000 miles," my friend answered; adding, "But let us speed on—the hour is passing." And in a moment we

rushed on. Again I saw a series of horrible and bloody scenes — the massacre of the Huguenots, the religious wars of France, the dire deeds of the Duke of Alva, the peasants' uprisings. Then followed scenes of slaughter from Peru, Mexico, and other American countries to which European avarice brought destruction.

"On, on!" I exclaimed impatiently.

After a short pause I saw Mathias Corvinus defeated by the Bohemians, the Tartars by the Russians, and the fanatical German crusaders conquered by the Hussites. Then followed the fratricidal battle of Lipany, where the Taborites were defeated by their Bohemian brethren in 1434, the bloody victories of the Hussites, the camp of Žižka, and the hero himself dying at Přebyslav in 1424.

Grief overcame my heart for a time, but again I saw numerous victories of the Taborites under Žižka's leadership, and, after a short pause, the horrible spectacle of Huss dying at the stake at Constance in 1415.

I could hardly catch sight of the images of all these scenes in flight before me or listen to my friend's instructive remarks; the blood began to rush to my head.

"How far are we now?" I inquired.

"About 598,000,000,000 miles," was the quiet reply. "We have flown through a

distance of about four hundred and fifty-one years. We have to travel a trifle of about 6,000,000,000,000 miles farther in order to reach the spheres of stars of the twelfth magnitude, whose light needs more than four thousand years to reach the earth."

"And is it possible to make this journey in an arbitrarily short time?" I asked, without thinking that I could not even imagine the enormous distance.

"Certainly," my friend replied.

"But tell me, please, what wonderful motor is it that moves our machine so rapidly through the universe."

"Later! Later!" he answers. "I must manage the machine. The least fault would make us lose our balance, and we should fall."

"Whither?" I ask.

"Do I know?"

"Let us rush on, then, as fast as we can!"

"If we are to finish our excursion in an hour, we must confine ourselves to a few more important views."

"Speed on, speed on!" I urge him.

Again I see a wonderful, but horrible panorama of strife. The scenes change rapidly, but each is very distinct. And lo! this time images of battles and skirmishes are intermingled with other scenes; but in all of them

there is some struggle in which the brutality of man's nature is triumphing, in which sheer force or fraud and deception are gaining the victory over natural weakness or guilelessness.

Suddenly I notice that while the scene is changing we are in darkness longer than usual.

"What's the matter?" I ask impatiently.

"I direct the machine so that you may see the final scene. We are farther than the stars of the twelfth magnitude, in spheres whose light reaches the earth in about six thousand years. This time, however, we shall change our mode of observation. When we reach the point of view I shall stop the machine, only allowing it to rotate so that the scene will develop before your eye in the natural, not in the reversed, order."

Soon a few bright rays pierce the darkness; then it changes into a gray fog, and the fog grows thinner and thinner. The dark contour of a wild, desolate land rises from the fog. Then I see a bare, stony plain, with a dense fir forest and a high mountain range in the background. A sultry, oppressive dusk, such as usually precedes a storm, overspreads the landscape; and only now and then the sun's rays pierce the dense clouds. Close to the forest, near a cave,

I see a young woman with three children. Two of them cling to their mother in fear; the third, a babe in arms, looks into its mother's eyes with a smile of happiness on its childish lips. But the pale face of the mother shows inexpressible fear and dread. Her eyes are fastened upon the dark thicket of the forest; her naked body is shivering; and while pressing the naked babe to her bosom with her left hand she stretches the right protectingly toward the other two naked children.

Suddenly a tall young man rushes out of the forest, carrying a doe on his shoulders. Another, stronger, rushes after him; a brutal fury blazes in his idiotic face. Both are naked. The first throws down the deer and courageously faces the other, who pursues him with a club in his hand. A duel ensues. The woman watches with deadly anxiety. It is a desperate fight for life. The first man falls; the stronger has broken his skull. The woman flies in despair, pressing the babe to her bosom. Both children follow her into the darkness of the forest.

I feel the blood running wildly in my veins, rushing to my brain, and vertigo seizing me. I try to speak, but fail. My friend forestalls me:

“You have just seen the first struggle of

the first of men. We are at the end of our excursion. From beginning to end you saw nothing but continual strife — a mutual killing and slaughter of the most perfect of beings. This struggle has been going on since the beginning of the world. In the course of several thousand years men tried to persuade themselves that the world was governed by the principle of love and humanity; but they find that they have been deceiving themselves. They have learned to know that a merciless and dreadful God has condemned to destruction everything that he has created weak and powerless. After thousands of years they recognize that life is but an everlasting struggle for mere existence. Men have been striving for power and glory, coveting riches, hugging their souls in the sweet embrace of sentimentality. The cold reason of Newton, fully penetrating the nothingness and perversion of men's endeavors, frightened and terrified them. They dreaded the cold, but truthful figures with which he measured the universe; the unmerciful consequences of his ice-cold, but indisputable calculations; and lo! to-day mankind stands before the throne of the Darwinian god — a horrible god of force and power. Certain people have fought this god for years; but the purpose of the fight is only to put the

dethroned gloomy god of religious fanaticism upon the throne of the god of force and power. But the fight against the Darwinian god is unequal. Should the whole world undertake the war, he cannot be dethroned. The throne of this god can be undermined only by principles of humanity."

My friend paused. His words thundered like the stern sentence of a just and austere judge. But I could not see his face; for we were in utter darkness. I kept silence. Suddenly my friend began again:

"What is that? Our machine is shaking — we have lost our balance! We sink!"

My friend's doleful voice so frightened me that my heart grew cold.

"Drop the machine!" my friend exclaimed. "One of us must sacrifice himself, else both of us will perish."

I did not answer; I could not. I only felt that my senses were failing.

"Leave, or I shall push you down!" my friend insisted again.

"Tell me the name of your motor, at least," I pleaded. At the same time I felt that the machine was overturned. We fell rapidly headlong; I dropped.

It seemed to me as though I heard my friend's wild laughter and these words:

"Good-by forever! My motor' is known to all the world. It is the ever-creating — Fancy."

The voice sounded hollow; I could hardly hear the last words, for I lost consciousness.

* * *

Any one who has fallen asleep at an open window in autumn, and awakens suddenly, knows the peculiar sensation of chilliness which accompanies the awakening. A like chill thrilled me when I noticed the glimmering dawn, the faint rays pouring through the half-open window into my lone room.

I looked around in surprise, and my first thought was: "Was it a reality, a delusion, or a dream?" But my senses were so dull that they could not answer the question. I remember only that it occurred to me at once that Dr. Sperlich, who announced the death of my friend in the Kinskýs' villa, had been dead for years, and that in the castle itself there never were any such corridors as those through which I had wandered. I remember, too, that I was sitting at my desk, on which an astronomical book lay open that I must have been reading before I fell asleep.

* * *

I recall no more. I became unconscious again. I did not wake up for some time.

Then I lay on my bed, and my dear old mother was kneeling by me. I opened my eyes and looked into her sincere, wrinkled face, and a feeling of inexpressible bliss thrilled my soul.

"Oh! my dear child, what were you doing? They ran for me and told me you were unconscious. This is the third day."

"The third day?"

"The third," my mother repeated. "The physician came here several times every day, and advised rest and quiet. He said something about signs of — insanity."

A clear thought flashed through my clouded mind. I shivered.

"And he said you must stop your studies for some time." My mother rose and lightly kissed my brow.

* * *

I followed the doctor's advice and stopped studying for some time; but the haunting thoughts return now after years.