

The Wind Howles

BY FRED. WHISHAW.

It has been simply delightful," said Nora Rousakof, jumping out of the sledge at her own door, "sledding by moonlight and through the forest would be lovely in any case, but hearing the wolves howl was a new experience—you are quite positive they were wolves?" she paused; both the brothers laughed.

"Noel and I know most things about forest life," said Cyril, who stood with her at the door, having assisted her from the sledge, and Noel, who held the reins, added, "I wish I had an acre of land for every wolf I have heard howl—weren't you a bit frightened, Nora?"

"Not a scrap—what, with two huntmen of renown like you and Cyril? You must take me again some night."

"Would you dare come with us if we drove after wolves—you might see one or two—?" Nora clasped her hands.

"O, yes—yes!" she cried—"Tomorrow if you will, or any evening; send me word beforehand and I'll be ready—good night."

She gave Cyril's hand a distinct squeeze. "Good night, Noel," she added, "I hope you weren't dull up there on the box?"

"Somebody must hold the reins," he murmured. He would have liked to add, "God knows I would prefer to sit quite close to you and hear your dear voice at my ear, but that's Cyril's privilege."

The brothers were silent for a few minutes as they drove homewards, sitting side by side now, both thoughtful.

"I am almost certain it's you, brother," said Noel presently; "she scarcely spoke a word to me, and how merrily and happily she chatted with you." Cyril did not reply.

"Don't you think so yourself?" continued Noel, brokenly.

"I'm afraid it is as you say, dear brother," Cyril replied softly; "God knows I am truly sorry for you."

"And God knows that since it may not be I, I am glad with all my soul that you should be the blessed one; I am not so mean as to grudge you happiness, brother!" Noel's words were brave, and his voice, too, until the last sentence, when it trembled a little.

Cyril said nothing, but he took his brother's hand and pressed it. He did not speak because he dared not tell Noel the truth, which was this:

Convinced as he was that Nora preferred him, the circumstance—instead of delighting him as Noel imagined that it must—weighed heavily upon his spirits. Until last autumn he had believed himself to be as much Nora's slave as Noel himself, but this last autumn he had discovered the acquaintance of an American girl in St. Petersburg.

"How perverse are the ways of love," he reflected, bitterly; "here is poor Noel dying for Nora and can't have her because of me, and I am dying for Miss Dorothy Osborne and can't tell her so because of Nora!"

Cyril decided to make a last struggle for freedom and Dorothy Osborne, and at the same time do his utmost for old Noel. He would plead for Noel; Nora should at least know that Noel's splendid heart was here to take or leave.

During the day Cyril bade his younger brother ride over to the Rousakof mansion in order to ask Nora whether she would care to accompany them in their nocturnal wolf hunt.

"Make all the running you can with her," said Cyril, "for remember I am to have my innings tonight."

"It won't be any good," Noel sighed, "because I'm always such a fool when she's there, and can't string two sensible words together!"

"Don't come if you feel at all frightened about it," he told Nora presently; "of course, there's an element of danger when there are many wolves about, as there seem to be now."

"I'm not in the least afraid," said Nora; "still if you would rather be without the responsibility of having a lady with you—"

"O, no, do come," Noel interrupted hastily—"I'm—I'm sure Cyril would be dreadfully disappointed if you didn't." An expression of impatience—almost a frown—passed quickly over Nora's face, but Noel did not observe it.

"Well, I'll come," she said. "I shall be ready at 9 to-night."

Functionally at that hour the brothers called for Nora. Noel sat on the box seat, holding the reins, the girl took her place beside Cyril. There was no need to ask whether they had brought a pig with them, for the little brute was in full voice, having recommenced his yells with redoubled energy when the sledge stopped at Nora's door, doubtless in the hope of inducing some one to let him out of his basket and take him back to his mother and brethren.

Then the long drive began through splendid pine forests lit up by a full moon, a sight to be seen once and never forgotten. The hush of night was almost unbroken, excepting when the pig—his basket shaken by Cyril's foot or by a jolt on the road—gave out piercing lamentations which murdered the beauty of the silence.

Noel heard Nora and Cyril speaking so softly. He listened with all care. There was nothing dishonorable about this, for he had told Cyril that he meant to do so. Listen as intently as he would, however, Noel could not catch more than a half of what his brother said; Cyril did not intend that he should.

"... So I have ventured to ask you ... whether it is merely friendship on your side or ... may hope that a sweeter word ... in short, Nora, can you and ... love ..."

Nora's answer came to Noel's ears clearly and distinctly. She spoke in tones of exaltation, of concentrated, deep, certain feeling; there was no doubt and no hesitation; she spoke aloud and from the depths of her being, so it seemed to Noel:

"O, yes—" she said, "call it love, Cyril; with all my heart and soul I love—" A jolt, just at the last word set the pig squealing so that Noel lost that one word, the most important of all, had he known it, for him!

Poor Noel, he listened no more, though the two behind him continued to talk. A dull booming and thudding had commenced within his head and heart; he sat silent, stricken.

"At any rate, dear old Cyril will be happy—and so will

she!" This was the saving thought that kept him from despair.

Suddenly Cyril's voice broke upon his miserable reflections.

"Noel—look!" he cried—"on the right—one—two—four wolves—"

Noel roused himself with a start and looked to right and left. "And on the left three," he said—"no, four, five—and some follow behind!"

Noel was wide awake now, so was his brother; both young men were well aware that wolves, mere harmless cowards when met with singly or in couples, become extremely dangerous when packed; just as disaffected individuals among human creatures are comparatively innocuous, while an angry mob is as dangerous to deal with as a corps of madmen. Noel whipped up his ponies; they had seen and scented the wolves and were already anxious, their ears working backwards and forwards, and their eyes showed white as they glanced to this side and that.

"Shoot when you can, Cyril," said Noel. "It is five miles to Gorka, I will see to the ponies."

A moment later Cyril fired a shot. A wounded wolf uttered a piteous howl, quickly stifled by its companions, which fell upon the poor beast and pulled him down. The taste of blood excited them; they came nearer, baying, yelping, howling as they ran. Cyril fired again and brought down his wolf, but fully a score seemed to follow on, though many stopped to fight over the carcass.

"It is serious, Nora, but do not be afraid; with Noel to keep the ponies to their work we shall pull through; we wanted wolves, but there can be too many of them!"

"Keep on shooting, Cyril," cried Noel from the box.

Cyril fired shot after shot, but the jolting disturbed his aim, and he missed several times; worse than this, on one occasion the ponies shied so suddenly from a daring wolf that made a dash at the head of the off horse that the sledge collided against a tree trunk. Cyril clutched at the girl by his side and held on to her as the sledge righted itself, but the gun was thrown out with the concussion, together with the pig in his hamper, and Noel's gun, which lay in the straw at the bottom of the sledge, went also.

"Holy saints, you were nearly gone, Nora," exclaimed Cyril, white and trembling; "Noel, both the guns are lost—"

Noel made no reply. One of the ponies limped and was tiring; the situation was becoming dangerous. He whipped up his beasts and led obediently to them; they responded quickly. "Three miles, my jewels!" he cried. "A hundred jumps and you're at home—wooloo, boys! gallop!"

Terrified, panting, limping, the brave little ponies galloped on. One fell lame. Without an instant's pause Noel handed the reins to his brother:

"Vainka is lame," he said, "I must cut him adrift!"

He climbed along the shaft and performed the operation deftly and successfully; poor Vainka, finding himself free,

darted off into the forest, pursued by half of the wolves. Petka, the surviving pony, was the gamest of little animals, but the weight of the sledge with its three occupants, combined with the pace, soon began to tell upon him. Noel had taken the reins again. There was still a mile and a half.

"He will not quite do it," Noel thought. Nevertheless, Petka struggled bravely on for half a mile in response to his encouraging cries. Then he slowed off seriously and panted ominously. Noel sat and brooded upon his box seat.

"If I can do it," he reflected, "Petka may drag the lighted sledge in; if not, he won't, that's certain." And again—"what does it matter, so long as Nora is safe and Cyril survives to assure her happiness. Besides, if I made noise enough, I might—"

A moment later he spoke:

"Take the reins again, Cyril," he said, suddenly, and speaking rapidly. "Petka tires, the load is too heavy for him. I heard your conversation a little while ago. My dear brother will make you happy, Nora—God bless you both and good-by in case!"

"Brother, what are you saying, what are you doing," shouted Cyril. "It is you that Nora loves, man, she—"

But Cyril spoke too late, or at any rate he was so far too late that Noel had already taken the fatal leap from the sledge into the snow, but his words reached his brother's ears and that made an immense difference as matters turned out. Meanwhile the pony, Petka, sprang forward, for Noel's twelve stone six suddenly deducted from his load made his task considerably easier for him. Cyril would have pulled up, however, but that at the same moment Nora shrieked and fainted, nearly toppling over the side of the sledge, so that he was obliged to give Petka a free mouth, and see that his precious charge did not fall out among the wolves. Three minutes later the good pony had dragged them clear of the forest, and the few wolves which had followed them so far, the rest having remained to settle matters with Noel, tailed off and returned howling whence they came.

Cyril thundered at a peasant's door; it was the hut of Spiridon, one of the gamekeepers on the estate. He handed Nora over to the care of Spiridon's astonished wife.

"Three men and horses, quickly, Spiridon, and the guns,

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

of course—my happiness means your sorrow—I—"

Cyril laughed easily.

"O, no, it doesn't—I'm in love, Noel, but not with Nora," and Cyril proceeded to explain matters, to the wondrous delight of his brother, who had had no suspicion of the state of affairs.

Nora had recovered consciousness, though her condition of anxiety was deplorable until Cyril entered to tell her the joyful news of Noel's safety.

He came out again presently. "She wants you in there," he grinned.

"Cyril—for heaven's sake tell me, what am I to say?" murmured poor shy Noel—"I'd rather it was a dozen wolves—"

"Well, don't tell her so, you old fool," replied Cyril, laughing, and pushing his brother through the doorway.

"You may thank your stars I did your proposing for you, so in and do the kissing for yourself; that's all she needs just now!"

TOM MUNRO'S MURDER. By Herbert J. Allingham.

"CONFESS," said Munro, "I have committed most crimes once. Did I ever tell you how I blackmailed a man, and got \$5,000 out of him? Then there was my murder, quite an artistic affair."

There were four of us looting in the club reading room. It was a bright but cold October afternoon, and the first fire of the season blazed in the grate. We were all ranged about it, sprawling in saddle back chairs. There was Masters, the lawyer, who meant to do something some day; there was old Tufnell, the comedian, who had done all he meant to do twenty years ago; there was myself, the youngest of the group, an unacted playwrite; and there was Munro.

"A real one quite knew what Munro did for a living. He was a wanderer, and would absent himself from our set for months at a time, but he always turned up at the club sooner or later. He was a man of 45 or so, hair grizzled about the temples, face strong and hard, eyes keen but kind.

"Let's have the murder," said Masters with a yawn.

"A really artistic murder should possess dramatic possibilities," remarked the comedian ponderously, "and may be of service to our young friend here."

The old man indicated me with a patronizing gesture. Munro took his pipe from his mouth, and thoughtfully polished the bowl on the sleeve of his coat.

The beginning of the business was in the summer of '97," he began presently. "I left Chicago at a moment's notice. Eventually I found myself in Turkey, hobnobbing with a wicked old pasha of my acquaintance. One day I was with him in his house, which was more like a palace, when a dealer brought some newly captured slave girls for his inspection.

"My friend rejected the majority with scorn; but one beautiful Greek girl found favor in his sight, and after a lot of haggling with the dealer he purchased her.

"The girl, when she learned of her fate, was terrified, and made a painful scene.

"I am not, as you know, a ladies' man, but I confess the seared look in the girl's eyes made me feel qualmsish.

"At the pasha's request I spoke to her in her own language, but could get nothing from her except a despairing request to save her from her new master.

"The end of it was that I offered to repurchase her. My friend was amazed and much amused, but he good naturedly consented, and so Nada became my property.

"I offered to send the girl back to her people, but it appeared that they had been ruthlessly slaughtered when she was captured, and she swore that she would never leave me. The situation was embarrassing, and I anticipated all sorts of trouble. But Nada behaved splendidly. It is true she followed me about like a dog, but she never intruded herself upon my notice, and yet was always at hand to render me any service within her power.

"All went well for a time, and I had got quite used to

her being about the place, and even found myself missing her when she was absent.

"Then, in the autumn of '99 I went to Paris. There I found a certain M. Ionides lording it in fashionable society. He was, it appeared, a Greek merchant, who had made a fortune out of currants. He occupied a magnificent hotel, kept a retinue of servants, had a gorgeous equipage, and entertained in a most lavish and princely fashion.

"He was enormously rich, enormously fat, and as ugly as a satyr. We had been in Paris about a week, when this M. Ionides saw Nada, and at once took a fancy to her. I think I have told you the girl was really strikingly pretty. People turned in the street to look at her. Well, the Greek was fascinated by his countrywoman, and the result was that one day Nada came flying to me for protection. I soothed her, and thought no more of the matter, but on the morrow I had a visit from the great man.

"He was pretty frank, talking like a man accustomed to pay for what he wanted and to get it. He understood the young lady was my ward. Would I transfer my office to him? Between men of the world, any sum I might name, would I mention a figure, and so forth.

"I looked at his ugly face, his great pendulous cheeks, the puffy mounds of flesh under his beady eyes; and then I thought of Nada, delicate, innocent, childlike.

"In the end I told M. Ionides cautiously that to my extreme regret the matter could not be arranged.

"He smiled and shrugged his fat shoulders; but as he went out he remarked softly that in his experience he had always found it possible to arrange such matters.

"A few days later I had to leave Paris on business. I was away about forty-eight hours. When I returned I was informed that Nada had disappeared.

"Immediately I suspected the fat Greek, and decided to call upon the gentlemen when I had dined.

"However, I had just finished the meal in my own house in the Rue Barbet de Jouy, and was sipping my coffee alone, when the door of the room was unceremoniously flung open.

"I sprang to my feet and confronted a wild, mad looking creature. Her hair was disheveled, her clothes torn and wet, her face distorted, her eyes fixed and glaring. Nevertheless, it was Nada.

"The girl was quite mad. At times she would fall on the ground at my feet moaning piteously, then in a frenzy of hysteria she would rave at me, and then again she would turn shivering from me, and crouching in a corner, would sink in silence. No connected story, hardly an intelligible sentence, could I get from her. I sent for assistance, and she was put to bed. The good woman whose services I had requisitioned came to me in about half an hour, and her face was grave. She told me that the girl had been terribly ill-used. She was a mass of bruises, and across her shoulders were the livid marks made by the lash of a whip.

"When I heard that I gave instructions that she should

be properly cared for, then lit a cigar, and walked across to the hotel of M. Ionides.

"I found him alone in his magnificent apartment, seated behind a richly inlaid oak table. I thought I detected amused expectation in his tiny eyes, but there was certainly no shadow of fear in them. Evidently the fat rascal felt secure behind his rampart of gold. Evidently, too, his creatures were near at hand to protect him from present violence, perhaps crouching behind the heavy curtains which hung at his side.

"Indeed, as I drew near to the table his great puffy right hand rested on it within an inch of a button of an electric bell.

"I took all this in at a glance, and between the door and the table, a matter of five paces, I had made up my mind how I should kill this oily, smug faced villain, for I knew that if I challenged him he would not fight.

"I apologized for the lateness of my call. 'The fact is,' I said, laughing, 'I am devoured by curiosity. You kept your word and you have got the girl; but how the dickens did you manage it?'

"He was taken aback a little, I think, but he readily fell into my humor. He laughed and chuckled over his achievement till his great sides shook. Then he offered me money. I would not listen to this, assuring him that I considered myself fairly beaten, and I congratulated him on his adroitness.

"He was delighted. 'You are a man after my own heart,' he declared. 'But you need not congratulate me. The business turned out most unfortunately. The girl was a fool. Why, my dear sir, she tried to kill me! Of course, I had to give her a lesson, but it did no good.' He raised his fat, beringed hands in a gesture of disgust. 'You know my little place on the Seine? She was locked up in a room high above the river, but she jumped out of the window and was drowned.'

"From that time," went on Munro in his queer, emotionless monotone, "I cultivated the acquaintance of M. Ionides, and we became inseparable. Do you know I found him an amusing companion?"

"One forenoon we were drinking wine together in a famous cafe—he ate and drank at all hours—and he happened to turn his ponderous bulk away so as to stare in comfort at a pretty woman at a distant table. I took the opportunity to drop a little white pellet into his glass.

"You know I have made a study of poisons. In this country there is a prejudice against them nowadays, I know, but it was not always so. The drug I used was an old Italian poison. I believe originally it came from the east, but it owes its fame to the extensive use made of it by the Borgias in Italy. Its peculiarity, which is also its great virtue, is that it does not kill its victim until the expiration of thirty days or thereabouts.

"I staid with M. Ionides until he had drained his glass. Then I left him.

"My next step was to persuade Nada to write a letter

to her countryman in which she prophesied his early death. The girl was still quite out of her senses, but with me she was submissive and obedient.

"Every day a letter to the same purport was sent to the Greek, and each letter was signed 'Nada of the Seine.'

"A week passed before I saw M. Ionides again. He was greatly changed. He was paler, and less grossly fat, and his great face had lost its complacent simper. He confided in me, whom he declared to be his one true friend in Paris. He told me that he experienced queer and alarming pains in his head, and he admitted that he was worried by an anonymous letter writer. 'Of course, it is ridiculous,' he declared; 'but she—that is, I mean the writer of these confounded letters—says I shall not live beyond the 29th of this month. And—well, it is now the 8th. I tell you, my friend, I don't like it!'

"The days went by. The Greek grew thinner, more worried, and the pains in his head became more frequent. The most famous doctors of Paris could make nothing of his complaint, and asked him if he had any secret worry.

"Every day I called upon him to watch him as he slowly died. It was, I remember, on the 23d that he met me in a stormy and rebellious mood. 'I will throw this thing off,' he shrieked. 'Six more days to live! Bah! I am scaring myself into the grave. This cursed scribbler tells me I shall die on Friday next. Well, it is a lie, I will live! On Saturday next I will give a banquet such as Paris has not seen for many a year, and all society shall be present. Thus will I celebrate my triumph.'

"I cordially approved of the plan, telling him that in the preparations for the banquet he would forget his vain fears. With feverish eagerness he pursued the idea. The short week went swiftly by. The fatal Friday came and went, and the Greek still lived. I found him Saturday morning almost mad with delight. A great weight seemed to have been lifted from his soul. All fear of death had passed away from him. Even the pains which had been his constant companions for a month appeared to have vanished. That night I attended the banquet at the Ionides mansion—a banquet still talked of in Paris. It is easy to sneer at the vulgarity of wealth, but it is hard not to be fascinated by the splendor it can purchase.

"The cream of Paris fashion, beauty, and talent assembled round the Greek merchant's table.

"Never had I seen the man so exultant, so vivacious, so full of life. He and I were probably the two happiest persons in the room. He did not know, and I did, that in an adjoining room a woman, closely veiled, was awaiting my signal.

"She sat alone, swaying gently to and fro, and crooning softly to herself.

"The hours passed swiftly with good food, good wine, and good talk. The affair was at its height. Some one proposed the toast, 'The Giver of the Feast.' It was drunk

with acclamation, and the unwieldy Greek rose to reply.

"Then I gave my signal, and at the same time slipped quietly out of my seat at the foot of the table.

"My place was taken by a figure dressed wholly in black.

"All eyes were turned upon her as she drew off her veil. White as the damask cloth on the table, but more beautiful than I had ever seen her, she stood silent and motionless.

"Ionides leaned heavily on the table with both hands, and stared at her with eyes almost as wild as fixed as her own.

"Then she raised a thin, delicate arm slowly, pointed at him with a gesture quite mechanical, and uttered the one sentence I had rehearsed to her a thousand times during the last week—"The Seine gives up its dead."

"The Greek's jaws moved, the muscles of his face were convulsed, and the veins stood out on his forehead. Again and again he tried to speak, but no words passed his lips.

"Then suddenly he straightened himself up, his great arms sawed the air, his flashing fingers clawed at nothingness, and at last a cry, shrill, piercing, and blood curdling, escaped him, a cry of mingled agony and horror.

"Then he fell forward and crashed down upon the table among the gold, silver, and shattered glass, and there he lay like great, loathsome frog, ugly and disgusting. He was quite dead. I touched Nada on the arm and she followed me like an obedient child. I had thought the shock might restore her. That was my chief reason for confronting her with her countryman. But it was not a success. She never recovered her sanity."

Munro ceased speaking and began to refill his pipe. Masters yawned and rose to his feet.

"Did you ever try to write a novel, Munro?" he asked with his irritating drawl.

Tufnell and I laughed, both a little relieved, I think, at being brought back to the sane world after the greswome recital.

Munro said nothing, but, taking a letter from his pocket, flung it over to me.

I caught it, and the other two leaned over my shoulder as I read.

It was a brief notification from the superintendent of a private asylum, and it ran thus:

"Dear Sir: I have to inform you that the patient known as Nada is seriously ill. If you care to see her you may do so at any time of the day or night on presentation of this paper."

I noted that the letter bore a date two days old.

"I handed it back to Munro in silence. He twisted it into a spill and took a light for his pipe from the fire. Then he moved towards the door.

"You went, of course," I said impulsively. "Is she better?"

"Yes," he replied simply, "she died in my arms last night."

