CARENTA VIRGINIS.

Now trembling hangs the setting sun
Above the Thirty seas;
The heathen red and gleaming gold
Shines on our city trees;
But the hours are few in our sea,
And dark seems life to be;
For oh, the gods, the great gods,
Have taken my love away!

Come, sacred, ye Roman maid
Lie down and live in peace;
To only Death, the mild one,
To our sad bridal wake;
My people are cruelest Death,
But I—I cannot pray;
For oh, the gods, the great gods,
Have taken my love away!

—Boston Transcript.

MARIE LAFARGE.

"Where shall we go for our holiday," asked my friend Raymond, as we sat at breakfast one day toward the end of July, 18—.

Raymond and I had been friends at college, and had lived together in chambers in the Temple ever since we left Oxford.

We shared each other's tastes and amusements and were, in fact, inseparable.

"We seem to have done everything," remarked I, in reply to Raymond's question. "Can you suggest anything new?"

"Let us do some mountaineering."

"We have already been to Switzerland twice."

"Yes, in the ordinary tourist fashion. What I mean is, let us go off the beaten track and find out some new place for our selves."

"Agreed," said I, so in a few weeks' time we were off to the Alps.

After a few weeks in Interlaken, where we had friends, we went south to Kandersteg, and then set out to wander among the less frequented portion of the Bernese Oberland, and it was in this excursion that we heard of Marie Lafarge.

"Well, we're certainly having a good time," remarked Raymond one day as we tramped along. "But so far we haven't had a single adventure."

"We are on the eve of one now, perhaps, for the barometer is acting down terribly and let be caught in a violent storm on the edge of this precipice would be no joke."

"Why, look at the Finsteraarhorn! There is a storm brewing sure enough. Is there a village anywhere about, I wonder?" said Raymond, whose ardor for an adventure had cooled when he found it might be near at hand.

"You consulting the map there are a few houses about a mile further on."

"Let's hurry along, then," and we did.

We reached the village just as the storm burst. The hamlet consisted of some half dozen dwellings built on a narrow ledge of rock.

We looked around for a hostelry, but saw none. We went up to a peasant woman standing at the door of a cottage, we either, alas, did not find the inn.

"There is no inn," replied she, looking astonishment at the question.

"What do travelers do, then?"

"They never come here."

"Is there no one who will give us a night's lodging?" asked Raymond in desperation.

"Any of us would do so willingly," replied the woman kindly, "but we have no suitable accommodation. Mme. Lafarge might put you up. She has the largest house in the village, and mayhem never loses the chance of earning anything. Madame is not one of us. She comes from Geneva," added the woman thoughtfully.

"But mayhem is in such distress," interposed the woman's husband. "She has paid her last penny for the rent in a strange fit of generosity. There is reason to fear the poor girl has been murdered."

"What is would be useless to disturb the poor woman," said I.

"I don't know," replied the peasant woman, who appeared shrewder than her husband. "Mme. Lafarge is not one to make a course of earning money, and I never did think her heart was set on that girl Marie as she pretended. If you offer her good terms she'll neither be grief for a time. Grief soon always hide."

"We will try, at all events, thank you," said I, and taking one of the women's children as guide we took toward the spacious inn of Mme. Lafarge.

"What has happened to this girl that your father speaks of?" asked Raymond of the lad.

With some circumlocution he told a story, which we briefly as I can, was this:

Mme. Lafarge, who was a widow, had a daughter and a stepdaughter. The latter, Marie by name, had inherited a little fortune from her mother, being, also a charming girl she had been sought in marriage by one of the eligible young men of her own and the neighboring villages.

She was a dependent, however, in an inferior, genteel fashion, and while not positively discouraging any, she gave encouragement to none.

A handsome, daring young fellow from the next village, Max Holkmann by name, seemed likely, however, to be the happy man, and he and the stepdaughter Marie were on the point of being betrothed when Marie set out one fine afternoon to meet her lover and never returned.

This was about three weeks before the day on which we arrived at E——.

"Whom do they suspect?" asked Raymond.

The boy would not say at first, but a little cross-examination elicited the fact that suspicion was divided between the miserly stepmother, who had inherited the poor girl's property, and the lover, who was known to be of a passionate disposition and violently jealous.

Most people suspected the lover, however, more than the stepmother, inasmuch as some friends who were spending the day with Mme. Lafarge had her daughter witnessed the departure of Marie to meet Max. Mme. Lafarge, however, had her guests for a short time after Marie was lost, though, as far as the lover, she had not quitted the house. Max himself entered the house of the Lafarges an hour later, apparently much disturbed, and asked why Marie had not met him as she had promised.

"Have the remains of the poor girl been found yet?" asked Raymond.

"No. If she fell over the precipice at the point people think likely she never will be found."

A man fell over last year and they have never seen a trace of him since."

Presently we reached the house of the Lafarges.

It was the best in the hamlet, and stood somewhat apart from the others. It looked comfortable enough in its way, but a small sense of sadness, for which I could not accounted, fell upon me as we entered the dwelling.

In another moment I forgot everything else in surprise and admiration.

The hall was conducted to and called out when we entered the room, and a young girl answered the summons.

She was like most beautiful creature I had ever seen.

She had masses of rich yellow hair—not red, but the real tint of the precious metal.

Her complexion was of a dazzling fairness, and her eyes were of the deepest, strangest blue that I have ever seen. At one moment they seemed black, at another gray, at another blue. They were looked at us dreamy, but when they did their gaze became all one.

Miss Annette met her strange eyes meekly to the ground as she measured my stature as to the possibility of our sleeping in the house for the night.

"I will ask mother," she said in a low soft voice. "I am sure she will be glad to be of service."

Then she bobbed gracefully and vanished.

Presently Mme. Lafarge came to speak to us.

She was as great a contrast to her beautiful daughter as it is possible to imagine.

Although little more than forty years of age, her black hair was heavily streaked with gray. The neighbors declared that it became visibly grayer in the three months that had elapsed since Marie's disappearance. She had heavy features, broad brows and dark, hollow eyes, and her lips were thin and resolute.

Altogether her appearance was evil look ing, and I felt a strong dislike to her from the first moment of seeing her.

She was evidently by no means as anxious to be of service as her daughter had been, but, on the other hand, she did not object to earn the handsome drawer we promised her, so ultimately it was agreed that we should occupy a kind of bed under the roof for that night, and for longer if the storm continued.

This we at once and made ourselves at home in the kitchen, where Miss Annette was preparing supper.

We tried to talk to her, but it transpired that the Lafarges had recently removed from a French speaking canton, and the girl did not know much of German, nor did we of French, moreover. Annette displayed to some great conversational power in any language, for I noticed that she and her mother rarely spoke when we occupied the room. I thought her silence might be partly accounted for by her grief for the loss of her half sister, to whom she was said to have been dearly attached.

However, it was apparently enough for me to watch the girl's graceful movements and lovely face, and even fastidious Raymond began presently to evince a little interest in her.

We had ordered that we should be never better acquainted with the Lafarge family, however, as Raymond was mounting the ladder that led to our bed chamber he turned his feeling, for and spoken of his choice.

At first Raymond was for more huge jokes at the other than myself, and I just laughed with him in bed, rather sorrow than anything else, for the beauty Annette, while I exposed the ignorance.

"I'm afraid I shouldn't bid much consideration in the money of Mme. Annette," said he.

"Isn't she pretty enough to meet your appreciation?"

"Yes, but one gets sick of staring at a pretty doll that hasn't got two ideas in its brown hair."

However, it seemed to me presently that Raymond had changed himself to speak of the fair Annette's fashions, for when I turned I heard them sitting on a smoking seat in the little bedroom which did duty for a garden, but smoking? will content with each other's society.

Then a week passed idyllic enough. Raymond's ankle was well enough for us to go out, I thought, but to my surprise he never spoke of resuming our journey.

I began to be very impatient to leave the place. I strongly suspected that Mme. Lafarge knew more about her stepdaughter's death than she would have cared to own, and thinking this I was naturally anxious to quit her house.

Lately suggested to Raymond that we should go. He flatly refused.

I looked, not wonderment his pomposity, but I should have thought he had some sense of comfort if I had insisted. I again waited.

Two days later I went into the kitchen at an unusual hour, and lo!—Raymond sitting with Annette hand in his and gazing into her fathomless, mysterious eyes while she continued her simplified tale.

Was it possible that Raymond, a man of good family and brilliant prospects, had so far forgotten his own position and his duty to Lady Marion as to fall in love with an ignorant peasant of doubtful antecedents?

I stood stop this at once," I thought and setting my friend down I pour certain stories into him on his unpleasant conduct in making love to a girl who could never be his wife.

To my immense surprise he listened calmly to all I had to say, but positively refused to leave the house. Raymond was positive in a fault as a rule. I was completely puzzled.

"This Annette must be a shrewd, designing girl, under her show of simplicity and good nature," thought I. "I'll try to solve the mystery about Marie Lafarge. Surely, if I can prove that Mme. Lafarge is a murderess, we shall be saving a second one, that at least will bring Raymond to his senses."

I was lying awake one night, thinking intensely of Raymond and Annette, when I heard a door open softly on the ground floor.

Madame and her daughter slept themselves together, but as far apart as possible, the large kitchen separating their rooms.

I listened attentively, for everything that went on had a painful interest for me now.

Presently there was a sound as of some one talking in the kitchen.

I arose without awakening Raymond and mused the opposite a little.

It was Mme. Lafarge walking to and fro in the kitchen. She was talking to herself and apparently in great anguish of mind.

"Perhaps she is ill," thought I, and I was on the point of descending to her assistance when I caught a glimpse of her face in the moonlight.

It was the most ghastly sight I have ever seen. The woman was evidently a somnambulist. Her great black eyes were wide open and staring blankly before her as she stalked along.

At first she muttered so indistinctly that I could not hear what she was talking about, except that I more or twice caught the name of Marie.

Presently she passed in her walk, because more natural and spoke loudly.

She seemed to be addressing some imaginary lover.

"Come back, for the love of heaven, come away! Don't make her do it. I tell you, my murder, just as much as if you poisoned her over with your own hands. Yes, I am fond of gold, but not so I've loved it, I never murdered a fellow-creature for it."

She paused breathless for a moment.

"The girl was innocent, then," I thought, "and she said is done, but who did it?"

"Speak for—speak her!" muttered the woman in a agony of supplication. "Think when you die. She is your father's own child. Only spare her and I will find you a richer and a handsomer hundred times than Max, and I'll save and save and save until you are as rich as she is. I swear it! Listen! You won't have to wait for the money. Marie, for the love of heaven and your own soul, don't murder the girl. Annette, you are a thousand times more beautiful than she is, only wait and I will take you to Paris, where some great noble is sure to fall in love with you. My child, do not drive your soul with crime for the sake of—Oh, my God, she's gone!"

I leaned with a heavy heart and sorrowful.

Raymond and wakened and joined me. He, too, had heard the awful story of the woman who had compassed the destruction of her sister and was now, alas, searching the same fatal power over Raymond too well.

Annette was not in the room when we left the house for the night.

"I will ask mother," she said in a low soft voice. "I am sure she will be glad to be of service."

Stay. A medical friend of mine, who was a great student of hypnotism, has often told me he thought I possessed hypnotic power in no common degree. I had never cared to try the mental experiment lest I discovered to try my chosen reason my friend.

He paused as one almost like one distraught. There seemed to be a terrible struggle going on in his mind. Evidently my power affected him.

For a moment I thought I had indulged. The next moment he said in a low, broken voice, as of one in despair:

"No, no, I cannot. I must stop. Marie is—"

For a moment I was utterly aghast. They a new idea occurred to me.

I leaned across to the chamber of Annette and knocked at her door. She opened it.

"Good that you are, I have found out your secret," said I firmly, and feeling lately into those fearful eyes, which seemed stranger than ever in the light of the moon.

"Will that Raymond shall leave the place at once. Will it. I command you."

Raymond was leaning when I walked during this silent, terrible battle of will that followed.

For full four minutes Annette stood facing me, motionless as a statue, but her eyes fixed fearlessly on mine, and every nerve tuned to meet and master my will.

If I failed I knew that I and my friend were doomed. It would be better to be dead among the mountains with poor Marie Lafarge than to fall into the power of this creature of evil.

I strove with all my might against the terrible impulse to yield, which came to me again and again.

At length I began to be conscious of my own strength. I felt that her will was giving way. Finally she yielded. The eyes fell. She tried to lift them again. She fell back into her room totally prostrated.

I went triumphantly to Raymond.

He was lying on the bed.

I attempted to rouse him to consciousness, but to my horror I found that he was in a deep swoon.

My science had been passed, but as was a fool. Perhaps on the loss of my friend's reason.

I saw that, though I had conquered Annette, and forced her to take my bidding for the moment, she will resume the mastery over Raymond, whenever I, all powerless, with her, had no influence with him.

I made all arrangements for starting on our journey next day, for life well allowed me to do so I dreaded to be alone with Annette.

Then I lay down to rest and, strange to remember what I should do in regard to Annette.

I had not sense her of any legal crime, and yet I felt that it would be an act of humanity to leave this demon at large.

I knew that I was a coward with cause right to do. Human beings have a right to do or refuse mastery around the awful power intrusted to me.

I was thinking of Marie and found her to give me an omen of the death of Marie Lafarge. She had previously wrote I had assented.

I then said to her, "Tomorrow you will go before the Burgomaster of A——, the nearest town, and confess that you poisoned Marie Lafarge over the edge of the cliff, and you will persist in this declaration even though your mother should remain silent."

* * * * * * *

Raymond, though still dazed and stupified, was able to start with morning, and we left the place at sunrise, Annette, who he had received his senses, both he and I knew that he was no longer master.

A few weeks after our return to Paris I read in a Swiss paper an account of the trial of one Annette Lafarge, who was charged on her own confession with the murder of her half sister by pushing her over a precipice. The girl's mother, it was added, seems that she was present, having followed her daughter because, as she assisted, Annette said her sister had gone mad, but she confessed that Marie's death was purely accidental.

Annette, however, persisted in her original statement, and was ultimately found guilty and condemned to imprisonment for life. The unhappy mother, it was added, became insane from the shock of seeing the twofold, but unfortunately recovered.

Matters went on as usual, so far as Raymond was concerned, and I had begun to despair of any improvement in his condition when one morning, to my great joy, he came down looking more like his former self than I had ever seen him since our fatal journey.

"I do not know what has happened, but I feel as though a load had been lifted from my mind into nothing," he said.

I earnestly dared to hope that this change would be lasting, but it was so, and presently he resumed his professional work again as successfully as ever, and became engaged to his former sweetheart once more.

I obtained some fine of Swiss paper and came across the following paragraph:

"The murderess, Annette Lafarge, died in the prison of A——yesterday morning about 7 o'clock."

The date of this event was that of the day on which Raymond had arrived, so I could not but conclude she was telling the truth, except that I more or twice caught the name of Marie.

Presently she passed in her walk, because more natural and spoke loudly.

She seemed to be addressing some imaginary lover.

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Raymond and wakened and joined me. He, too, had heard the awful story of the woman who had compassed the destruction of her sister and was now, alas, searching the same fatal power over Raymond too well.

"Surely, now you know the truth about Annette, you will leave this accursed place," said I, half hopefully.

To my unutterable sorrow he replied.

"Poor girl! to help her. I am so sorry. No. I am at the mercy of that fiend in conjugal, or never Marie Lafarge was worse off than I am."

I felt desperate. Reasoning would avail nothing, I knew, against that fearful influence.

"Raymond, you are a coward," said I, in a low, hoarse voice, as one in despair.