

and where the music was that of the greatest music-makers that can be, who found rest and play in making better music for love than they ever made for hire—and were listened to as they should be, with understanding and religious silence, and all the fervent gratitude they deserved.

There were several such houses in London then—and are still—thank Heaven! And Little Billee had his little billet there—and there he was wont to drown himself in waves of lovely sound, or streams of clever talk, or rivers of sweet feminine adulation, seas! oceans!—a somewhat relaxing bath!—and forget for a while his everlasting chronic plague of heart-insensibility, which no doctor could explain or cure, and to which he was becoming gradually resigned—as one does to deafness or blindness or locomotor ataxia—for it had lasted nearly five years! But now and again, during sleep, and in a blissful dream, the lost power of loving—of loving mother, sister, friend—would be restored to him; just as with a blind man who sometimes dreams he has recovered his sight; and the joy of it would wake him to the sad reality: till he got to know, even in his dream, that he was only dreaming, after all, whenever that priceless boon seemed to be his own once more—and did his utmost not to wake. And these were nights to be marked with a white stone, and remembered!

And nowhere was he happier than at the houses of the great surgeons and physicians who interested themselves in his strange disease. When the Little Billees of this world fall ill, the great surgeons and physicians (like the great singers and musicians) do

better for them, out of mere love and kindness, than for the princes of the earth, who pay them thousand-guinea fees and load them with honors.

And of all these notable London houses none was pleasanter than that of Cornelys the great sculptor, and Little Billee was such a favorite in that house that he was able to take his friends Taffy and the Laird there the very day they came to London.

First of all they dined together at a delightful little Franco-Italian pothouse near Leicester Square, where they had bouillabaisse (magine the Laird's delight), and spaghetti, and a poulet rôti, which is *such* a different affair from a roast fowl! and salad, which Taffy was allowed to make and mix himself; and they all smoked just where they sat, the moment they had swallowed their food—as had been their way in the good old Paris days.

That dinner was a happy one for Taffy and the Laird, with their Little Billee apparently unchanged—as demonstrative, as genial, and caressing as ever, and with no swagger to speak of; and with so many things to talk about that were new to them, and of such delightful interest! They also had much to say—but they didn't say very much about Paris, for fear of waking up Heaven knows what sleeping dogs!

And every now and again, in the midst of all this pleasant foregathering and communion of long-parted friends, the pangs of Little Billee's miserable mind-malady would shoot through him like poisoned arrows.

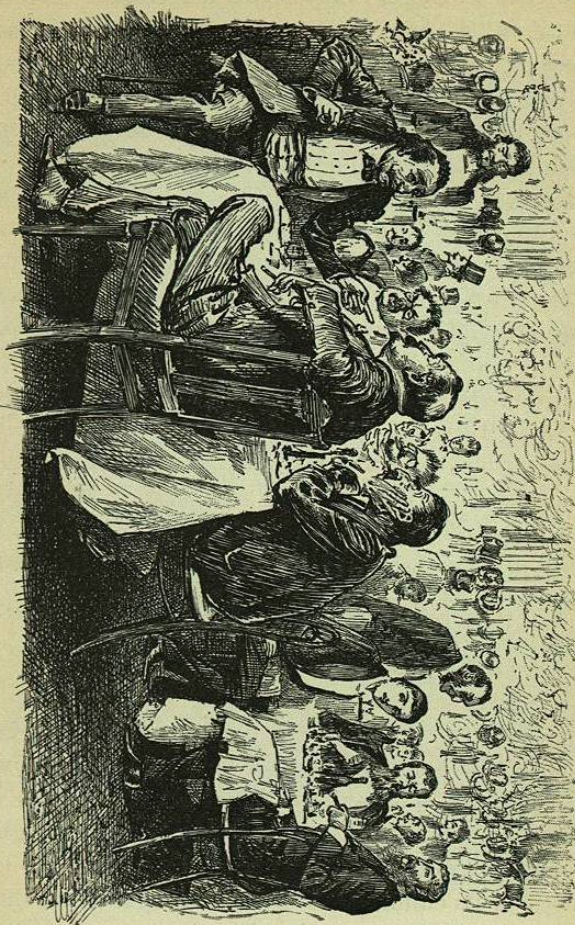
He would catch himself thinking how fat and fussy and serious about trifles Taffy had become; and what

a shiftless, feckless, futile duffer was the Laird; and how greedy they both were, and how red and coarse their ears and gills and cheeks grew as they fed, and how shiny their faces; and how little he would care, try as he might, if they both fell down dead under the table! And this would make him behave more caressingly to them, more genially and demonstratively than ever—for he knew it was all a grewsome physical ailment of his own, which he could no more help than a cataract in his eye!

Then, catching sight of his own face and form in a mirror, he would curse himself for a puny, misbegotten shrimp, an imp—an abortion—no bigger, by the side of the herculean Taffy or the burly Laird of Cockpen, than six-pennorth o' halfpence: a wretched little overrated follower of a poor trivial craft—a mere light amuser! For what did pictures matter, or whether they were good or bad, except to the triflers who painted them, the dealers who sold them, the idle, uneducated, purse-proud fools who bought them and stuck them up on their walls because they were told!

And he felt that if a dynamite shell were beneath the table where they sat, and its fuse were smoking under their very noses, he would neither wish to warn his friends nor move himself. He didn't care a d——!

And all this made him so lively and brilliant in his talk, so fascinating and droll and witty, that Taffy and the Laird wondered at the improvement success and the experience of life had wrought in him, and marvelled at the happiness of his lot, and almost found it in their warm affectionate hearts to feel a touch of envy!



A HAPPY DINNER

Oddly enough, in a brief flash of silence, "entre la poire et le fromage," they heard a foreigner at an adjoining table (one of a very noisy group) exclaim: "Mais quand je vous dis que j'ai entendue, moi, la Svengali! et même qu'elle a chanté l'Impromptu de Chopin absolument comme si c'était un piano qu'on jouait! voyons! . . ."

"Farceur! la bonne blague!" said another — and then the conversation became so noisily general it was no good listening any more.

"Svengali! how funny that name should turn up! I wonder what's become of *our* Svengali, by-the-way?" observed Taffy.

"I remember *his* playing Chopin's Impromptu," said Little Billee; "what a singular coincidence!"

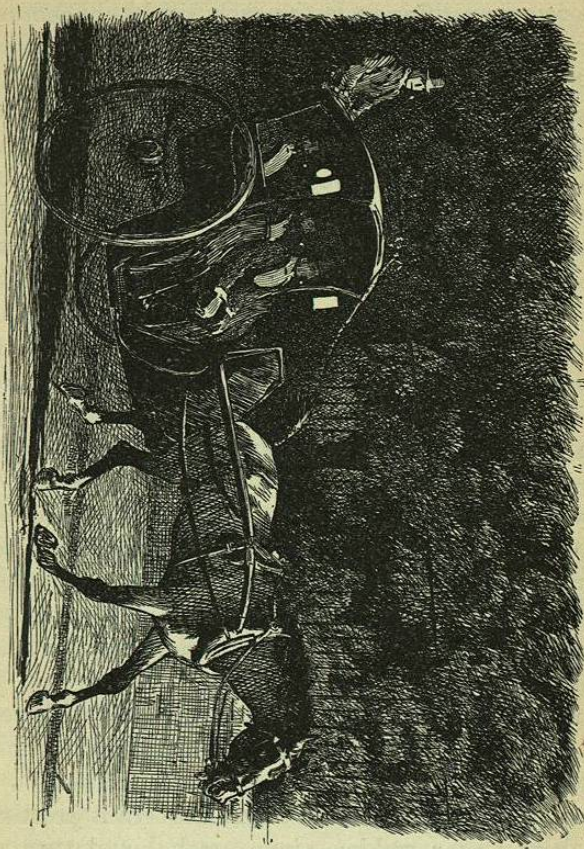
There were to be more coincidences that night; it never rains them but it pours!

So our three friends finished their coffee and liqueured up, and went to Cornelys's, three in a hansom—

"Like Mars,  
A-smokin' their poipes and cigyars."

Sir Louis Cornelys, as everybody knows, lives in a palace on Campden Hill, a house of many windows; and whichever window he looks out of, he sees his own garden and very little else. In spite of his eighty years, he works as hard as ever, and his hand has lost but little of its cunning. But he no longer gives those splendid parties that made him almost as famous a host as he was an artist.

When his beautiful wife died he shut himself up



"A-SMOKIN' THEIR POIPES AND CIGYARS"

from the world; and now he never stirs out of his house and grounds except to fulfil his duties at the Royal Academy and dine once a year with the Queen.

It was very different in the early sixties. There was no pleasanter or more festive house than his in London, winter or summer—no lordlier host than he—no more irresistible hostesses than Lady Cornelys and her lovely daughters; and if ever music had a right to call itself divine, it was there you heard it—on late Saturday nights during the London season—when the foreign birds of song come over to reap their harvest in London Town.

It was on one of the most brilliant of these Saturday nights that Taffy and the Laird, chaperoned by Little Billee, made their début at Mechelen Lodge, and were received at the door of the immense music-room by a tall, powerful man with splendid eyes and a gray beard, and a small velvet cap on his head—and by a Greek matron so beautiful and stately and magnificently attired that they felt inclined to sink them on their bended knees as in the presence of some overwhelming Eastern royalty—and were only prevented from doing so, perhaps, by the simple, sweet, and cordial graciousness of her welcome.

And whom should they be shaking hands with next but Antony, Lorrimer, and the Greek—with each a beard and mustache of nearly five years' growth!

But they had no time for much exuberant greeting, for there was a sudden piano crash—and then an immediate silence, as though for pins to drop—and Signor Giuglini and the wondrous maiden Adelina Patti sang the Miserere out of Signor Verdi's most

famous opera—to the delight of all but a few very superior ones who had just read Mendelssohn's letters (or misread them) and despised Italian music; and thought cheaply of "mere virtuosity," either vocal or instrumental.

When this was over, Little Billee pointed out all the lions to his friends—from the Prime Minister down to the present scribe—who was right glad to meet them again and talk of auld lang syne, and present them to the daughters of the house and other charming ladies.

Then Roucouly, the great French barytone, sang Durien's favorite song,

"Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment;  
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie. . . ."

with quite a little drawing-room voice—but quite as divinely as he had sung "Noël, Noël," at the Madeleine in full blast one certain Christmas eve our three friends remembered well.

Then there was a violin solo by young Joachim, then as now the greatest violinist of his time; and a solo on the piano-forte by Madame Schumann, his only peeress! and these came as a wholesome check to the levity of those for whom all music is but an agreeable pastime, a mere emotional delight, in which the intellect has no part; and also as a well-deserved humiliation to all virtuosi who play so charmingly that they make their listeners forget the master who invented the music in the lesser master who interprets it!

For these two—man and woman—the highest of their kind, never let you forget it was Sebastian Bach

they were playing—playing in absolute perfection, in absolute forgetfulness of themselves—so that if you weren't up to Bach, you didn't have a very good time!

But if you were (or wished it to be understood or thought you were), you seized your opportunity and you scored; and by the earnestness of your rapt and tranced immobility, and the stony, gorgon-like intensity of your gaze, you rebuked the frivolous—as you had rebuked them before by the listlessness and carelessness of your bored resignation to the Signorina Patti's trills and fioritures, or M. Roucouly's pretty little French mannerisms.

And what added so much to the charm of this delightful concert was that the guests were not packed together sardinewise, as they are at most concerts; they were comparatively few and well chosen, and could get up and walk about and talk to their friends between the pieces, and wander off into other rooms and look at endless beautiful things, and stroll in the lovely grounds, by moon or star or Chinese-lantern light.

And there the frivolous could sit and chat and laugh and flirt when Bach was being played inside; and the earnest wander up and down together in soul-communion, through darkened walks and groves and alleys where the sound of French or Italian warblings could not reach them, and talk in earnest tones of the great Zola, or Guy de Maupassant and Pierre Loti, and exult in beautiful English over the inferiority of English literature, English art, English music, English everything else.

For these high-minded ones who can only bear the sight of classical pictures and the sound of classical music do not necessarily read classical books in any language—no Shakespeares or Dantes or Molières or Goethes for *them*. They know a trick worth two of that!

And the mere fact that these three immortal French writers of light books I have just named had never been heard of at this particular period doesn't very much matter; they had cognate predecessors whose names I happen to forget. Any stick will do to beat a dog with, and history is always repeating itself.

Feydeau, or Flaubert, let us say—or for those who don't know French and cultivate an innocent mind, Miss Austen (for to be dead and buried is almost as good as to be French and immoral!)—and Sebastian Bach, and Sandro Botticelli—that all the arts should be represented. These names are rather discrepant, but they made very good sticks for dog-beating; and with a thorough knowledge and appreciation of these (or the semblance thereof), you were well equipped in those days to hold your own among the elect of intellectual London circles, and snub the philistine to rights.

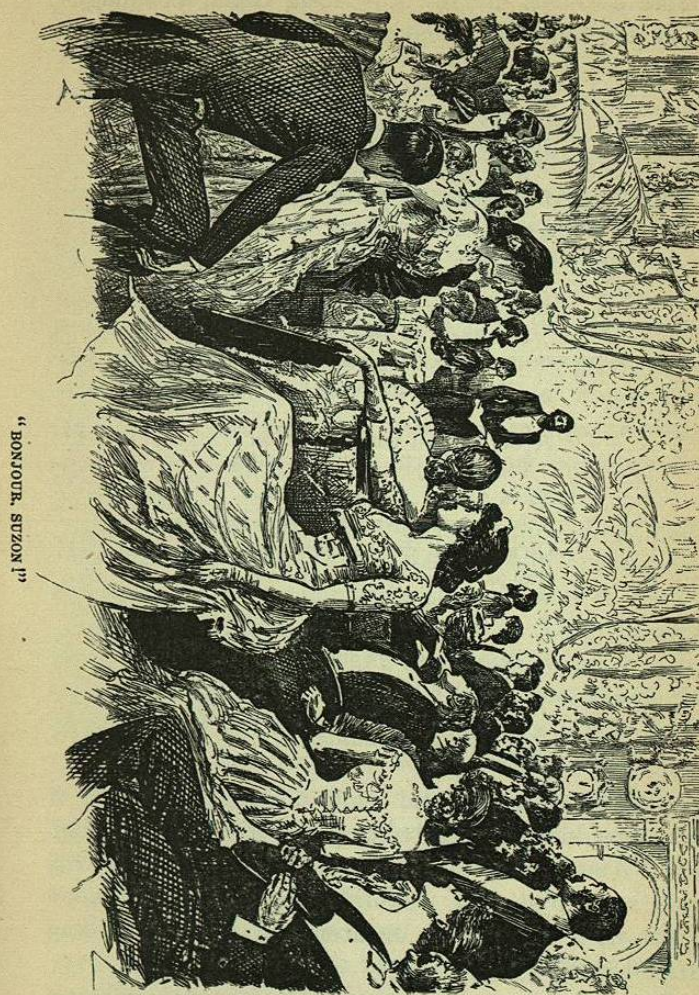
Then, very late, a tall, good-looking, swarthy foreigner came in, with a roll of music in his hands, and his entrance made quite a stir; you heard all round, "Here's Glorioli," or "Ecco Glorioli," or "Voici Glorioli," till Glorioli got on your nerves. And beautiful ladies, ambassadors, female celebrities of all kinds, fluttered up to him and cajoled and fawned;—

as Svengali would have said, "Prinzessen, Comtessen, Serene English Altessen!"—and they soon forgot their Highness and their Serenity!

For with very little pressing Glorioli stood up on the platform, with his accompanist by his side at the piano, and in his hands a sheet of music, at which he never looked. He looked at the beautiful ladies, and ogled and smiled; and from his scarcely parted, moist, thick, bearded lips, which he always licked before singing, there issued the most ravishing sounds that had ever been heard from throat of man or woman or boy! He could sing both high and low and soft and loud, and the frivolous were bewitched, as was only to be expected; but even the earnestest of all, caught, surprised, rapt, astounded, shaken, tickled, teased, harrowed, tortured, tantalized, aggravated, seduced, demoralized, corrupted into naturalness, forgot to dissemble their delight.

And Sebastian Bach (the especially adored of all really great musicians, and also, alas! of many priggish outsiders who don't know a single note and can't remember a single tune) was well forgotten for the night; and who were more enthusiastic than the two great players who had been playing Bach that evening? For these, at all events, were broad and catholic and sincere, and knew what was beautiful, whatever its kind.

It was but a simple little song that Glorioli sang, as light and pretty as it could well be, almost worthy of the words it was written to, and the words are De Musset's; and I love them so much I cannot resist the temptation of setting them down here, for the



"BONJOUR, SEZON!"

mere sensuous delight of writing them, as though I had just composed them myself :

“Bonjour, Suzon, ma fleur des bois !  
 Es-tu toujours la plus jolie ?  
 Je reviens, tel que tu me vois,  
 D'un grand voyage en Italie !  
 Du paradis j'ai fait le tour—  
 J'ai fait des vers—j'ai fait l'amour. . . .  
 Mais que t'importe !  
 Mais que t'importe !  
 Je passe devant ta maison :  
 Ouvre ta porte !  
 Ouvre ta porte !  
 Bonjour, Suzon !

“Je t'ai vue au temps des lilas.  
 Ton cœur joyeux venait d'éclore,  
 Et tu disais : 'je ne veux pas,  
 Je ne veux pas qu'on m'aime encore.'  
 Qu'as-tu fait depuis mon départ ?  
 Qui part trop tôt revient trop tard.  
 Mais que m'importe ?  
 Mais que m'importe ?  
 Je passe devant ta maison :  
 Ouvre ta porte !  
 Ouvre ta porte !  
 Bonjour, Suzon !”

And when it began, and while it lasted, and after it was over, one felt really sorry for all the other singers. And nobody sang any more that night ; for Glorioli was tired, and wouldn't sing again, and none were bold enough or disinterested enough to sing after him.

Some of my readers may remember that meteoric bird of song, who, though a mere amateur, would

condescend to sing for a hundred guineas in the saloons of the great (as Monsieur Jourdain sold cloth) ; who would sing still better for love and glory in the studios of his friends.

For Glorioli—the biggest, handsomest, and most distinguished-looking Jew that ever was—one of the Sephardim (one of the Seraphim!)—hailed from Spain, where he was junior partner in the great firm of Moralés, Peralés, Gonzalés, & Glorioli, wine-merchants, Malaga. He travelled for his own firm ; his wine was good, and he sold much of it in England. But his voice would bring him far more gold in the month he spent here ; for his wines have been equalled—even surpassed—but there was no voice like his anywhere in the world, and no more finished singer.

Anyhow, his voice got into Little Billee's head more than any wine, and the boy could talk of nothing else for days and weeks ; and was so exuberant in his expressions of delight and gratitude that the great singer took a real fancy to him (especially when he was told that this fervent boyish admirer was one of the greatest of English painters) ; and as a mark of his esteem, privately confided to him after supper that every century two human nightingales were born—only two ! a male and a female ; and that he, Glorioli, was the representative “male rossignol of this soi-disant dix-neuvième siècle.”

“I can well believe that ! And the female, your mate that should be—*la rossignolle*, if there is such a word ?” inquired Little Billee.

“Ah ! mon ami . . . it was Alboni, till la petite

Adelina Patti came out a year or two ago; and now it is *la Svengali*."

"La Svengali?"

"Oui, mon fy! You will hear her some day — et vous m'en direz des nouvelles!"

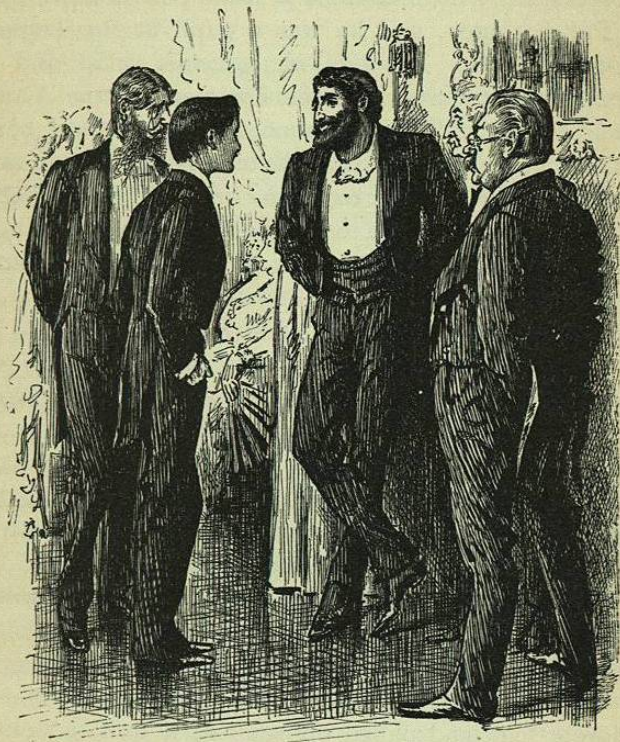
"Why, you don't mean to say that she's got a better voice than Madame Alboni?"

"Mon ami, an apple is an excellent thing — until you have tried a peach! Her voice to that of Alboni is as a peach to an apple—I give you my word of honor! but bah! the voice is a detail. It's what she does with it—it's incredible! it gives one cold all down the back! it drives you mad! it makes you weep hot tears by the spoonful! Ah! the tear, mon fy! tenez! I can draw everything but *that*! Ça n'est pas dans mes cordes! I can only madden with *love*! But la Svengali! . . . And then, in the middle of it all, prrrout! . . . she makes you laugh! Ah! le beau rire! faire rire avec des larmes plein les yeux—voilà qui me passe! . . . Mon ami, when I heard her it made me swear that even *I* would never try to sing any more—it seemed *too* absurd! and I kept my word for a month at least—and you know, je sais ce que je vauz, moi!"

"You are talking of la Svengali, I bet," said Signor Spartia.

"Oui, parbleu! You have heard her?"

"Yes—at Vienna last winter," rejoined the greatest singing-master in the world. "J'en suis fou! hélas! I thought *I* could teach a woman how to sing, till I heard that blackguard Svengali's pupil. He has married her, they say!"



A HUMAN NIGHTINGALE



"That *blackguard* Svengali!" exclaimed Little Billee . . . "why, that must be a Svengali I knew in Paris—a famous pianist! a friend of mine!"

"That's the man! also une fameuse crapule (sauf vot' respect); his real name is Adler; his mother was a Polish singer; and he was a pupil at the Leipsic Conservatorio. But he's an immense artist, and a great singing-master, to teach a woman like that! and such a woman! belle comme un ange—mais bête comme un pot. I tried to talk to her—all she can say is 'ja wohl,' or 'doch,' or 'nein,' or 'soh'! not a word of English or French or Italian, though she sings them, oh! but *divinely!* It is '*il bel canto*' come back to the world after a hundred years. . . ."

"But what voice is it?" asked Little Billee.

"Every voice a mortal woman can have—three octaves—four! and of such a quality that people who can't tell one tune from another cry with pleasure at the mere sound of it directly they hear her; just like anybody else. Everything that Paganini could do with his violin, she does with her voice—only better—and what a voice! un vrai baume!"

"Now I don't mind petting zat you are schbeaking of la Sfencali," said Herr Kreutzer, the famous composer, joining in. "Quelle merfeille, hein? I heard her in St. Betersburg, at ze Vinter Balace. Ze vomen all vent mat, and pulled off zeir beards and tiamonts and kave zem to her—vent town on zeir knees and gried and gissed her hants. She tit not say vun vort! She tit not efen schmile! Ze men schnifelled in ze gorners, and looked at ze bictures, and tissempled—efen I, Johann Kreutzer! efen ze Emperor!"

"You're joking," said Little Billee.

"My vrent, I neffer choke ven I talk apout zinging. You vill hear her zum tay yourzelof, and you vill acree viz me zat zere are two classes of beoble who zing. In ze vun class, la Sfencali; in ze ozzer, all ze ozzer zingers!"

"And does she sing good music?"

"I ton't know. *All* music is koot ven *she* zings it. I forket ze zong; I can only sink of ze zinger. Any koot zinger can zing a peautiful zong and kif bleasure, I zubboce! But I voot zooner hear la Sfencali zing a scale zan anypotty else zing ze most peautiful zong in ze vorldt—efen vun of my own! Zat is berhaps how zung ze crate Italian zingers of ze last century. It vas a lost art, and she has found it; and she must haf pecun to zing pefore she pecan to schpeak—or else she voot not haf hat ze time to learn all zat she knows, for she is not yet zirty! She zings in Paris in Ogdoper, Gott sei dank! and gums here after Christmas to zing at Trury Lane. Chullien kifs her ten sousand bounts!"

"I wonder, now! Why, that must be the woman I heard at Warsaw two years ago—or three," said young Lord Witlow. "It was at Count Siloszech's. He'd heard her sing in the streets, with a tall black-bearded ruffian, who accompanied her on a guitar, and a little fiddling gypsy fellow. She was a handsome woman, with hair down to her knees, but stupid as an owl. She sang at Siloszech's, and all the fellows went mad and gave her their watches and diamond studs and gold scarf-pins. By gad! I never heard or saw anything like it. I don't know much about music myself—couldn't tell 'God save the

Queen' from 'Pop goes the Weasel,' if the people didn't get up and stand and take their hats off; but I was as mad as the rest—why, I gave her a little German silver vinaigrette I'd just bought for my wife; hanged if I didn't—and I was only just married, you know! It's the peculiar twang of her voice, I suppose!"

And hearing all this, Little Billee made up his mind that life had still something in store for him, since he would some day hear la Svengali. Anyhow, he wouldn't shoot himself till then!

Thus the night wore itself away. The Prinzessen, Comtessen, and Serene English Altessen (and other ladies of less exalted rank) departed home in cabs and carriages; and hostess and daughters went to bed. Late sitters of the ruder sex supped again, and smoked and chatted and listened to comic songs and recitations by celebrated actors. Noble dukes hobnobbed with low comedians; world-famous painters and sculptors sat at the feet of Hebrew capitalists and aitchless millionaires. Judges, cabinet ministers, eminent physicians, and warriors and philosophers saw Sunday morning steal over Campden Hill and through the many windows of Mechelen Lodge, and listened to the pipe of half-awakened birds, and smelt the freshness of the dark summer dawn. And as Taffy and the Laird walked home to the Old Hummums by daylight, they felt that last night was ages ago, and that since then they had foregathered with "much there was of the best in London." And then they reflected that "much there was of the best in London" were

still strangers to them—except by reputation—for there had not been time for many introductions; and this had made them feel a little out of it; and they found they hadn't had such a very good time after all. And there were no cabs. And they were tired, and their boots were tight.

And the last they had seen of Little Billee before leaving was a glimpse of their old friend in a corner of Lady Cornelys's boudoir, gravely playing cup-and-ball with Fred Walker for sixpences—both so rapt in the game that they were unconscious of anything else, and both playing so well (with either hand) that they might have been professional champions!

And that saturnine young sawbones, Jakes Talboys (now Sir Jakes, and one of the most genial of Her Majesty's physicians), who sometimes after supper and champagne was given to thoughtful, sympathetic, and acute observation of his fellow-men, remarked to the Laird in a whisper that was almost convivial: "Rather an enviable pair! Their united ages amount to forty-eight or so, their united weights to about fifteen stone, and they couldn't carry you or me between them. But if you were to roll all the other brains that have been under this roof to-night into one, you wouldn't reach the sum of their united genius. . . . I wonder which of the two is the most unhappy!"

. . . . .

The season over, the song-birds flown, summer on the wane, his picture, the "Moon-Dial," sent to Moses Lyon's (the picture-dealer in Conduit Street), Little