

disturb her maiden dream of love! And all as though it were a scene in Elysium, and the *Fräulein* a nymph of many-fountained *Ida*, and her people Olympian gods and goddesses.

And such, indeed, they were when *Trilby* sang of them!

After this, when the long, frantic applause had subsided, she made a gracious bow to the royal British opera-glass (which had never left her face), and sang "*Ben Bolt*" in English!

And then *Little Billee* remembered there was such a person as *Svengali* in the world, and recalled his little flexible *flageolet*!

"That is how I teach *Gecko*; that is how I teach *la bedite Honarine*; that is how I teach *il bel canto*. . . . It was lost, *il bel canto*—and I found it in a dream—I, *Svengali*!"

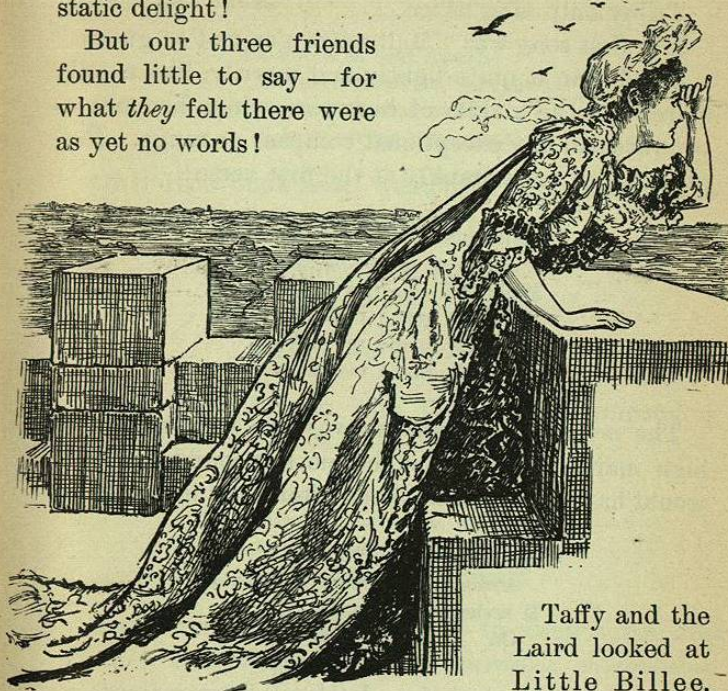
And his old cosmic vision of the beauty and sadness of things, the very heart of them, and their pathetic evanescence, came back with a tenfold clearness—that heavenly glimpse beyond the veil! And with it a crushing sense of his own infinitesimal significance by the side of this glorious pair of artists, one of whom had been his friend and the other his love—a love who had offered to be his humble mistress and slave, not feeling herself good enough to be his wife!

It made him sick and faint to remember, and filled him with hot shame, and then and there his love for *Trilby* became as that of a dog for its master!

She sang once more—"Chanson de Printemps," by *Gounod* (who was present, and seemed very hysterical), and the first part of the concert was over, and

people had time to draw breath and talk over this new wonder, this revelation of what the human voice could achieve; and an immense hum filled the hall—astonishment, enthusiasm, ecstatic delight!

But our three friends found little to say—for what *they* felt there were as yet no words!



"MALBROUCK S'EN VA-T'EN GUERRE"

Taffy and the Laird looked at *Little Billee*, who seemed to be looking inward at some

transcendent dream of his own; with red eyes, and his face all pale and drawn, and his nose very pink, and rather thicker than usual; and the dream appeared to be out of the common blissful, though his

eyes were swimming still, for his smile was almost idiotic in its rapture!

The second part of the concert was still shorter than the first, and created, if possible, a wilder enthusiasm.

Trilby only sang twice.

Her first song was "Malbrouck s'en va-t'en guerre."

She began it quite lightly and merrily, like a jolly march; in the middle of her voice, which had not as yet revealed any exceptional compass or range. People laughed quite frankly at the first verse:

"Malbrouck s'en va-t'en guerre—  
*Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!*  
Malbrouck s'en va-t'en guerre. . . .  
Ne sais quand reviendra!  
Ne sais quand reviendra!  
Ne sais quand reviendra!"

The *mironton mirontaine* was the very essence of high martial resolve and heroic self-confidence; one would have led a forlorn hope after hearing it once!

"Il reviendra-z à Pâques—  
*Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!*  
Il reviendra-z à Pâques. . . .  
Ou . . . à la Trinité!"

People still laughed, though the *mironton, mirontaine*, betrayed an uncomfortable sense of the dawning of doubts and fears—vague forebodings!

"La Trinité se passe—  
*Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!*  
La Trinité se passe. . . .  
Malbrouck ne revient pas!"

And here, especially in the *mironton, mirontaine*, a note of anxiety revealed itself—so poignant, so acutely natural and human, that it became a personal anxiety of one's own, causing the heart to beat, and one's breath was short.

"Madame à sa tour monte—  
*Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!*  
Madame à sa tour monte,  
Si haut qu'elle peut monter!"

Oh! How one's heart went with her! Anne! Sister Anne! Do you see anything?

"Elle voit de loin son page—  
*Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!*  
Elle voit de loin son page,  
Tout de noir habillé!"

One is almost sick with the sense of impending calamity—it is all but unbearable!

"Mon page—mon beau page!—  
*Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!*  
Mon page—mon beau page!  
Quelle nouvelles apportez?"

And here Little Billee begins to weep again, and so does everybody else! The *mironton, mirontaine*, is an agonized wail of suspense—poor bereaved duchess!—poor Sarah Jennings! Did it all announce itself to you just like that?

All this while the accompaniment had been quite simple—just a few obvious ordinary chords.

But now, quite suddenly, without a single modulation or note of warning, down goes the tune a full

major third, from E to C—into the graver depths of Trilby's great contralto—so solemn and ominous that there is no more weeping, but the flesh creeps; the accompaniment slows and elaborates itself; the march becomes a funeral march, with muted strings, and quite slowly:

“Aux nouvelles que j'apporte—  
*Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!*  
Aux nouvelles que j'apporte,  
Vos beaux yeux vont pleurer!”

Richer and richer grows the accompaniment. The *mironton, mirontaine*, becomes a dirge!

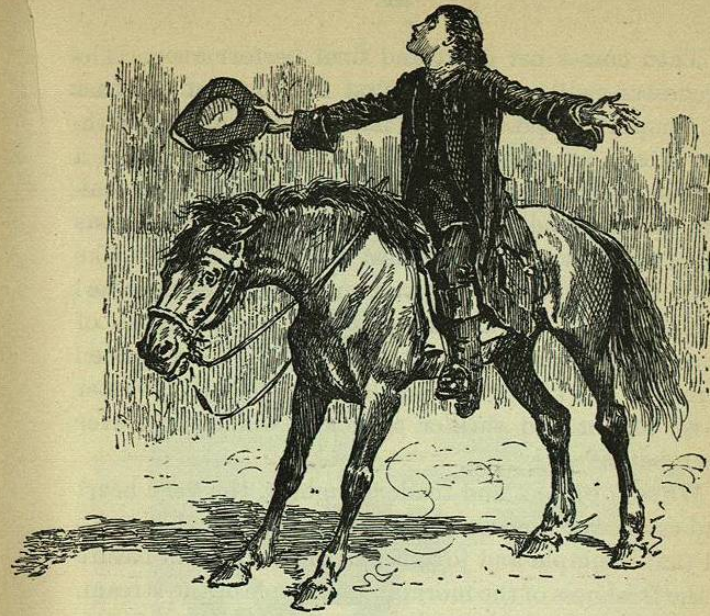
“Quittez vos habits roses—  
*Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!*  
Quittez vos habits roses,  
Et vos satins brochés!”

Here the ding-donging of a big bell seems to mingle with the score; . . . and very slowly, and so impressively that the news will ring forever in the ears and hearts of those who hear it from la Svengali's lips:

“Le Sieur Malbrouck est mort—  
*Mironton, mironton, mirontaine!*  
Le Sieur—Malbrouck—est—mort!  
Est mort—et enterré!”

And thus it ends quite abruptly!

And this heart-rending tragedy, this great historical epic in two dozen lines, at which some five or six thousand gay French people are sniffing and mopping their eyes like so many Niobes, is just a common old French



“AUX NOUVELLES QUE J'APPORTE,  
VOS BEAUX YEUX VONT PLEURER!”

comic song—a mere nursery ditty, like “Little Bo-peep”—to the tune,

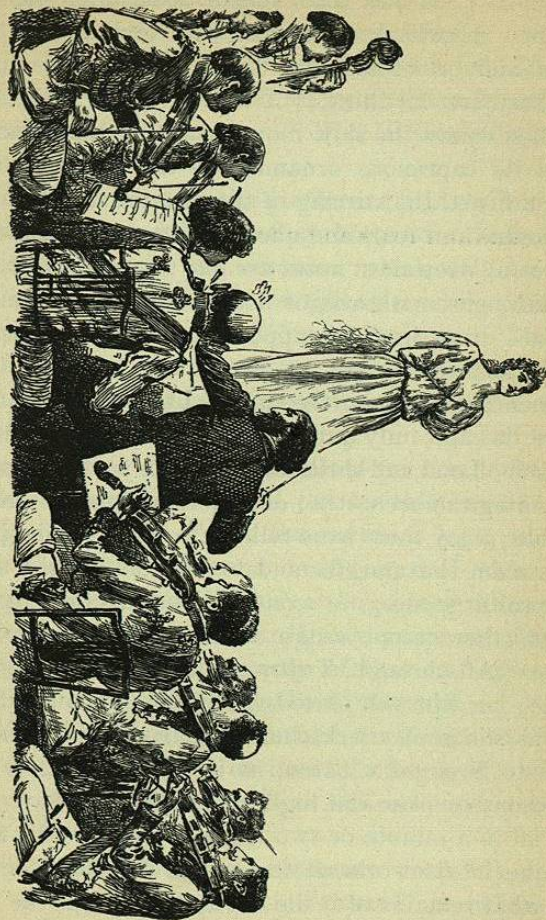
“We won't go home till morning,  
Till daylight doth appear.”

And after a second or two of silence (oppressive and impressive as that which occurs at a burial when the handful of earth is being dropped on the coffin-lid) the audience bursts once more into madness; and la Svengali, who accepts no encores, has to bow for nearly five minutes, standing amid a sea of flowers. . . .

Then comes her great and final performance. The orchestra swiftly plays the first four bars of the bass in Chopin's Impromptu (A flat); and suddenly, without words, as a light nymph catching the whirl of a double skipping-rope, la Svengali breaks in, and vocalizes that astounding piece of music that so few pianists can even play; but no pianist has ever played it like this; no piano has ever given out such notes as these!

Every single phrase is a string of perfect gems, of purest ray serene, strung together on a loose golden thread! The higher and shriller she sings, the sweeter it is; higher and shriller than any woman had ever sung before.

Waves of sweet and tender laughter, the very heart and essence of innocent, high-spirited girlhood, alive to all that is simple and joyous and elementary in nature—the freshness of the morning, the ripple of the stream, the click of the mill, the lisp of wind in the trees, the song of the lark in the cloudless sky—the sun and the dew, the scent of early flowers and summer woods and meadows—the sight of birds and bees and butterflies and frolicsome young animals at play—all the sights and scents and sounds that are the birthright of happy children, happy savages in favored climes—things within the remembrance and the reach of most of us! All this, the memory and the feel of it, are in Trilby's voice as she warbles that long, smooth, lilting, dancing laugh, that wondrous song without words; and those who hear feel it all, and remember it with her. It is irresistible; it forces itself on you; no words, no pictures, could ever do the like! So that the tears that are shed out of all these many French eyes are tears of



UN IMPROMPTU DE CHOPIN

pure, unmixed delight in happy reminiscence! (Chopin, it is true, may have meant something quite different—a hot-house, perhaps, with orchids and arum lilies and tuberose and hydrangeas—but that is neither here nor there.)

Then comes the slow movement, the sudden adagio, with its capricious ornaments—the waking of the virgin heart, the stirring of the sap, the dawn of love; its doubts and fears and questionings; and the mellow, powerful, deep chest notes are like the pealing of great golden bells, with a light little pearl shower tinkling round—drops from the upper fringe of her grand voice as she shakes it. . . .

Then back again the quick part, childhood once more, da capo, only quicker! hurry, hurry! but distinct as ever. Loud and shrill and sweet beyond compare—drowning the orchestra; of a piercing quality quite ineffable; a joy there is no telling; a clear, purling, crystal stream that gurgles and foams and bubbles along over sunlit stones; “a wonder, a world’s delight!”

And there is not a sign of effort, of difficulty overcome. All through, Trilby smiles her broad, angelic smile; her lips well parted, her big white teeth glistening as she gently jerks her head from side to side in time to Svengali’s bâton, as if to shake the willing notes out quicker and higher and shriller. . . .

And in a minute or two it is all over, like the lovely bouquet of fireworks at the end of the show, and she lets what remains of it die out and away like the afterglow of fading Bengal fires—her voice receding into the distance—coming back to you like an echo from all round, from anywhere you please—quite soft—

hardly more than a breath; but *such* a breath! Then one last chromatically ascending rocket, pianissimo, up to E in alt, and then darkness and silence!

And after a little pause the many-headed rises as one, and waves its hats and sticks and handkerchiefs, and stamps and shouts. . . . “Vive la Svengali! Vive la Svengali!”

Svengali steps on to the platform by his wife’s side and kisses her hand; and they both bow themselves backward through the curtains, which fall, to rise again and again and again on this astounding pair!

Such was la Svengali’s début in Paris.

It had lasted little over an hour, one quarter of which, at least, had been spent in plaudits and courtesies!

The writer is no musician, alas! (as, no doubt, his musical readers have found out by this) save in his thralldom to music of not too severe a kind, and laments the clumsiness and inadequacy of this wild (though somewhat ambitious) attempt to recall an impression received more than thirty years ago; to revive the ever-blessed memory of that unforgettable first night at the Cirque des Bashibazoucks.

Would that I could transcribe here Berlioz’s famous series of twelve articles, entitled “La Svengali,” which were republished from *La Lyre Éolienne*, and are now out of print!

Or Théophile Gautier’s elaborate rhapsody, “Madame Svengali—Ange, ou Femme?” in which he proves that one need not have a musical ear (he hadn’t) to be enslaved by such a voice as hers, any more than the eye for beauty (this he *had*) to fall the victim of

"her celestial form and face." It is enough, he says, to be simply human! I forget in which journal this eloquent tribute appeared; it is not to be found in his collected works.

Or the intemperate diatribe by Herr Blagner (as I will christen him) on the tyranny of the prima donna called "Svengalismus"; in which he attempts to show that mere virtuosity carried to such a pitch is mere viciousity—base acrobatismus of the vocal chords, a hysteric appeal to morbid Gallic "sentimentalismus"; and that this monstrous development of a phenomenal larynx, this degrading cultivation and practice of the abnormalismus of a mere physical peculiarity, are death and destruction to all true music; since they place Mozart and Beethoven, and even *himself*, on a level with Bellini, Donizetti, Offenbach—any Italian tune-tinkler, any ballad-monger of the hated Paris pavement! and can make the highest music of all (even *his own*) go down with the common French herd at the very first hearing, just as if it were some idiotic refrain of the café chantant!

So much for Blagnerismus *v.* Svengalismus.

But I fear there is no space within the limits of this humble tale for these masterpieces of technical musical criticism.

Besides, there are other reasons.

Our three heroes walked back to the boulevards, the only silent ones amid the throng that poured through the Rue St. Honoré, as the Cirque des Bashibazoucks emptied itself of its over-excited audience.

They went arm in arm, as usual; but this time Lit-

tle Billee was in the middle. He wished to feel on each side of him the warm and genial contact of his two beloved old friends. It seemed as if they had suddenly been restored to him, after five long years of separation; his heart was overflowing with affection for them, too full to speak just yet! Overflowing, indeed, with the love of love, the love of life, the love of death—the love of all that is, and ever was, and ever will be! just as in his old way.

He could have hugged them both in the open street, before the whole world; and the delight of it was that this was no dream; about that there was no mistake. He was himself again at last, after five years, and wide awake; and he owed it all to Trilby!

And what did he feel for Trilby? He couldn't tell yet. It was too vast as yet to be measured; and, alas! it was weighted with such a burden of sorrow and regret that he might well put off the thought of it a little while longer, and gather in what bliss he might: like the man whose hearing has been restored after long years, he would revel in the mere physical delight of hearing for a space, and not go out of his way as yet to listen for the bad news that was already in the air, and would come to roost quite soon enough.

Taffy and the Laird were silent also; Trilby's voice was still in their ears and hearts, her image in their eyes, and utter bewilderment still oppressed them and kept them dumb.

It was a warm and balmy night, almost like mid-summer; and they stopped at the first café they met on the Boulevard de la Madeleine (*comme autrefois*), and ordered bocks of beer, and sat at a little table on

the pavement, the only one unoccupied; for the café was already crowded, the hum of lively talk was great, and "la Svengali" was in every mouth.

The Laird was the first to speak. He emptied his bock at a draught, and called for another, and lit a cigar, and said, "I don't believe it was Trilby, after all!" It was the first time her name had been mentioned between them that evening—and for five years!

"Good heavens!" said Taffy. "Can you doubt it?"

"Oh yes! that was Trilby," said Little Billee.

Then the Laird proceeded to explain that, putting aside the impossibility of Trilby's ever being taught to sing in tune, and her well-remembered loathing for Svengali, he had narrowly scanned her face through his opera-glass, and found that in spite of a likeness quite marvellous there were well-marked differences. Her face was narrower and longer, her eyes larger, and their expression not the same; then she seemed taller and stouter, and her shoulders broader and more drooping, and so forth.

But the others wouldn't hear of it, and voted him cracked, and declared they even recognized the peculiar twang of her old speaking voice in the voice she now sang with, especially when she sang low down. And they all three fell to discussing the wonders of her performance like everybody else all round; Little Billee leading, with an eloquence and a seeming of technical musical knowledge that quite impressed them, and made them feel happy and at ease; for they were anxious for his sake about the effect this sudden and so unexpected sight of her would have upon him after all that had passed.

He seemed transcendently happy and elate—incomprehensibly so, in fact—and looked at them both with quite a new light in his eyes, as if all the music he had heard had trebled not only his joy in being alive, but his pleasure at being with them. Evidently he had quite outgrown his old passion for her, and that was a comfort indeed!

But little Billee knew better.

He knew that his old passion for her had all come back, and was so overwhelming and immense that he could not feel it just yet, nor yet the hideous pangs of a jealousy so consuming that it would burn up his life. He gave himself another twenty-four hours.

But he had not to wait so long. He woke up after a short, uneasy sleep that very night, to find that the flood was over him; and he realized how hopelessly, desperately, wickedly, insanely he loved this woman, who might have been his, but was now the wife of another man; a greater than he, and one to whom she owed it that she was more glorious than any other woman on earth—a queen among queens—a goddess! for what was any earthly throne compared to that she established in the hearts and souls of all who came within the sight and hearing of her! beautiful as she was besides—beautiful, beautiful! And what must be her love for the man who had taught her and trained her, and revealed her towering genius to herself and to the world!—a man resplendent also, handsome and tall and commanding—a great artist from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot!

And the remembrance of them—hand in hand, master and pupil, husband and wife—smiling and



“AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF THEM—HAND IN HAND”

bowing in the face of all that splendid tumult they had called forth and could not quell, stung and tortured and maddened him so that he could not lie still, but got up and raged and rampaged up and down his hot, narrow, stuffy bedroom, and longed for his old familiar brain-disease to come back and narcotize his trouble, and be his friend, and stay with him till he died!

Where was he to fly for relief from such new memories as these, which would never cease; and the old memories, and all the glamour and grace of them that had been so suddenly called out of the grave? And how could he escape, now that he felt the sight

of her face and the sound of her voice would be a craving—a daily want—like that of some poor starving outcast for warmth and meat and drink?

And little innocent, pathetic, ineffable, well-remembered sweetnesses of her changing face kept painting themselves on his retina; and incomparable tones of this new thing, her voice, her infinite voice, went ringing in his head, till he all but shrieked aloud in his agony.

And then the poisoned and delirious sweetness of those mad kisses,

“by hopeless fancy feigned  
On lips that are for others”!

And then the grewsome physical jealousy, that miserable inheritance of all artistic sons of Adam, that plague and torment of the dramatic, plastic imagination, which can idealize so well, and yet realize, alas! so keenly. After three or four hours spent like this, he could stand it no longer; madness was lying his way. So he hurried on a garment, and went and knocked at Taffy's door.

“Good God! what's the matter with you?” exclaimed the good Taffy, as Little Billee tumbled into his room, calling out:

“Oh, Taffy, Taffy, I've g-g-gone mad, I think!” And then, shivering all over, and stammering incoherently, he tried to tell his friend what was the matter with him, with great simplicity.

Taffy, in much alarm, slipped on his trousers and made Little Billee get into his bed, and sat by his side holding his hand. He was greatly perplexed, fearing



the recurrence of another attack like that of five years back. He didn't dare leave him for an instant to wake the Laird and send for a doctor.

Suddenly Little Billee buried his face in the pillow and began to sob, and some instinct told Taffy this was the best thing that could happen. The boy had always been a highly strung, emotional, over-excitabile, over-sensitive, and quite uncontrolled mammy's-darling, a cry-baby sort of chap, who had never been to school. It was all a part of his genius, and also a part of his charm. It would do him good once more to have a good blub after five years! After a while Little Billee grew quieter, and then suddenly he said: "What a miserable ass you must think me, what an unmanly duffer!"

"Why, my friend?"

"Why, for going on in this idiotic way. I really couldn't help it. I went mad, I tell you. I've been walking up and down my room all night, till everything seemed to go round."

"So have I."

"You? What for?"

"The very same reason."

"What!"

"I was just as fond of Trilby as you were. Only she happened to prefer *you*."

"What!" cried Little Billee again. "*You* were fond of Trilby?"

"I believe you, my boy!"

"In *love* with her?"

"I believe you, my boy!"

"She never knew it, then!"



"I BELIEVE YOU, MY BOY!"

"Oh yes, she did."

"She never told me, then!"

"Didn't she? That's like her. *I* told *her*, at all events. I asked her to marry me."

"Well—I *am* damned! When?"

"That day we took her to Meudon, with Jeannot, and dined at the Garde Champêtre's, and she danced the cancan with Sandy."

"Well—I *am*— And she *refused* you?"

"Apparently so."

"Well, I— Why on earth did she refuse you?"

"Oh, I suppose she'd already begun to fancy *you*, my friend. *Il y en a toujours un autre!*"

"Fancy *me*—prefer *me*—to *you*?"

"Well, yes. It *does* seem odd—eh, old fellow? But there's no accounting for tastes, you know. She's built on such an ample scale herself, I suppose, that she likes little uns—contrast, you see. She's very maternal, I think. Besides, you're a smart little chap; and you ain't half bad; and you've got brains and talent, and lots of cheek, and all that. I'm rather a *ponderous* kind of party."

"Well—I *am* damned!"

"*C'est comme ça!* I took it lying down, you see."

"Does the Laird know?"

"No; and I don't want him to—nor anybody else."

"Taffy, what a regular downright old trump you are!"

"Glad you think so; anyhow, we're both in the same boat, and we've got to make the best of it. She's another man's wife, and probably she's very fond of him. I'm sure she ought to be, cad as he is, after all he's done for her. So there's an end of it."

"Ah! there'll never be an end of it for *me*—never—never—oh, never, my God! She would have married me but for my mother's meddling, and that stupid old ass, my uncle. What a wife! Think of all she must have in her heart and brain, only to *sing* like that! And, O Lord! how beautiful she is—a goddess! Oh, the brow and cheek and chin, and the way her head's put on! did you *ever* see anything like it? Oh, if only I hadn't written and told my mother I was going to marry her! why, we should have been man and wife for five years by this time—living at Barbizon—painting away like mad! Oh, what a heavenly life!

Oh, curse all officious meddling with other people's affairs! Oh! oh! . . ."

"There you go again! What's the good? and where do *I* come in, my friend? *I* should have been no better off, old fellow—worse than ever, I think."

Then there was a long silence.

At length Little Billee said:

"Taffy, I can't tell you what a trump you are. All I've ever thought of you—and God knows that's enough—will be nothing to what I shall always think of you after this."

"All right, old chap."

"And now I think *I*'m all right again, for a time—and I shall cut back to bed. Good-night! Thanks more than I can ever express!" And Little Billee, restored to his balance, cut back to his own bed just as the day was breaking.