

“Lâche—grand lâche! che fous enferrai mes témoins!”

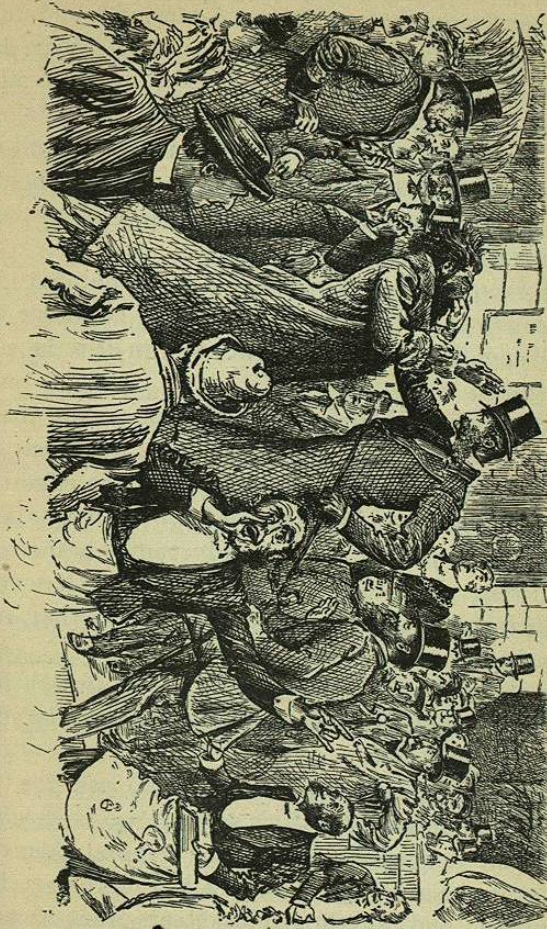
“At your orders!” said Taffy, in beautiful French, and drew out his card-case, and gave him his card in quite the orthodox French manner, adding: “I shall be here till to-morrow at twelve—but that is my London address, in case I don’t hear from you before I leave. I’m sorry, but you really mustn’t spit, you know—it’s not done. I will come to you whenever you send for me—even if I have to come from the end of the world.”

“Très bien! très bien!” said a military-looking old gentleman close by, who gave Taffy *his* card, in case he might be of any service—and who seemed quite delighted at the row—and indeed it was really pleasant to note with what a smooth, flowing, rhythmical spontaneity the good Taffy could always improvise these swift little acts of summary retributive justice: no hurry or scurry or flurry whatever—not an inharmonious gesture, not an infelicitous line—the very poetry of violence, and its only excuse!

Whatever it was worth, this was Taffy’s special gift, and it never failed him at a pinch.

When the commissaire de police arrived, all was over. Svengali had gone away in a cab, and Taffy put himself at the disposition of the commissaire.

They went into the post-office and discussed it all with the old military gentleman, and the majordome in velvet, and the two clerks who had seen the original insult. And all that was required of Taffy and his friends for the present was “their names, prenames, titles, qualities, age, address, nationality, occupation,” etc.



“VITE! VITE! UN COMMISSAIRE DE POLICE!”

"C'est une affaire qui s'arrangera autrement, et autre part!" had said the military gentleman—monsieur le général Comte de la Tour-aux-Loups.

So it blew over quite simply; and all that day a fierce unholy joy burned in Taffy's choleric blue eye.

Not, indeed, that he had any wish to injure Trilby's husband, or meant to do him any grievous bodily harm, whatever happened. But he was glad to have given Svengali a lesson in manners.

That Svengali should injure *him* never entered into his calculations for a moment. Besides, he didn't believe Svengali would show fight; and in this he was not mistaken.

But he had, for hours, the feel of that long, thick, shapely Hebrew nose being kneaded between his gloved knuckles, and a pleasing sense of the effectiveness of the tweak he had given it. So he went about chewing the cud of that heavenly remembrance all day, till reflection brought remorse, and he felt sorry; for he was really the mildest-mannered man that ever broke a head!

Only the sight of Little Billee's blood (which had been made to flow by such an unequal antagonist) had roused the old Adam.

No message came from Svengali to ask for the names and addresses of Taffy's seconds; so Dodor and Zouzou (not to mention Mister the general Count of the Tooraloorals, as the Laird called him) were left undisturbed; and our three musketeers went back to London clean of blood, whole of limb, and heartily sick of Paris.

Little Billee stayed with his mother and sister in Devonshire till Christmas, Taffy staying at the village inn.

It was Taffy who told Mrs. Bagot about la Svengali's all but certain identity with Trilby, after Little Billee had gone to bed, tired and worn out, the night of their arrival.

"Good heavens!" said poor Mrs. Bagot. "Why, that's the new singing woman who's coming over here! There's an article about her in to-day's *Times*. It says she's a wonder, and that there's no one like her! Surely that can't be the Miss O'Ferrall I saw in Paris!"

"It seems impossible—but I'm almost certain it is—and Willy has no doubts in the matter. On the other hand, McAlister declares it isn't."

"Oh, what trouble! So *that's* why poor Willy looks so ill and miserable! It's all come back again. Could she sing at all then, when you knew her in Paris?"

"Not a note—her attempts at singing were quite grotesque."

"Is she still very beautiful?"

"Oh yes; there's no doubt about that; more than ever!"

"And her singing—is that so very wonderful? I remember that she had a beautiful voice in speaking."

"Wonderful? Ah, yes; I never heard or dreamed the like of it. Grisi, Alboni, Patti—not one of them to be mentioned in the same breath!"

"Good heavens! Why, she must be simply irresistible! I wonder you're not in love with her your-

self. How dreadful these sirens are, wrecking the peace of families!"

"You mustn't forget that she gave way at once at a word from you, Mrs. Bagot; and she was very fond of Willy. She wasn't a siren then."

"Oh yes—oh yes! that's true—she behaved very well—she did her duty—I can't deny that! You must try and forgive me, Mr. Wynne—although I can't forgive *her*!—that dreadful illness of poor Willy's—that bitter time in Paris. . . ."

And Mrs. Bagot began to cry, and Taffy forgave. "Oh, Mr. Wynne—let us still hope that there's some mistake—that it's only somebody like her! Why, she's coming to sing in London after Christmas! My poor boy's infatuation will only increase. What *shall* I do?"

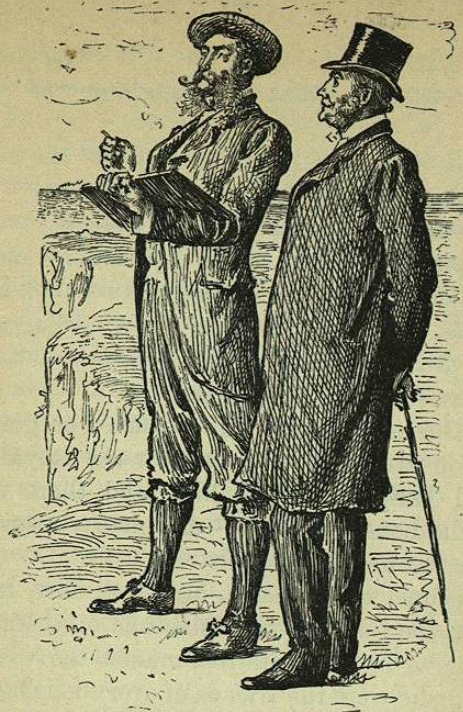
"Well—she's another man's wife, you see. So Willy's infatuation is bound to burn itself out as soon as he fully recognizes that important fact. Besides, she cut him dead in the Champs Élysées—and her husband and Willy had a row next day at the hotel, and cuffed and kicked each other—that's rather a bar to any future intimacy, I think."

"Oh, Mr. Wynne! my son cuffing and kicking a man whose wife he's in love with! Good heavens!"

"Oh, it was all right—the man had grossly insulted him—and Willy behaved like a brick, and got the best of it in the end, and nothing came of it. I saw it all."

"Oh, Mr. Wynne—and you didn't interfere?"

"Oh yes, I interfered—everybody interfered! It was all right, I assure you. No bones were broken



"I SUPPOSE YOU DO ALL THIS KIND OF THING FOR MERE AMUSEMENT, MR. WYNNE?"

on either side, and there was no nonsense about calling out, or swords or pistols, and all that."

"Thank Heaven!"

In a week or two Little Billee grew more like himself again, and painted endless studies of rocks and cliffs and sea—and Taffy painted with him, and was very content. The vicar and Little Billee patched up their feud. The vicar also took an immense fancy to Taffy, whose cousin, Sir Oscar Wynne, he had known

at college, and lost no opportunity of being hospitable and civil to him. And his daughter was away in Algiers.

And all "the nobility and gentry" of the neighborhood, including "the poor dear marquis" (one of whose sons was in Taffy's old regiment), were civil and hospitable also to the two painters—and Taffy got as much sport as he wanted, and became immensely popular. And they had, on the whole, a very good time till Christmas, and a very pleasant Christmas, if not an exuberantly merry one.

After Christmas Little Billee insisted on going back to London—to paint a picture for the Royal Academy; and Taffy went with him; and there was dullness in the house of Bagot—and many misgivings in the maternal heart of its mistress.

And people of all kinds, high and low, from the family at the Court to the fishermen on the little pier and their wives and children, missed the two genial painters, who were the friends of everybody, and made such beautiful sketches of their beautiful coast.

La Svengali has arrived in London. Her name is in every mouth. Her photograph is in the shop-windows. She is to sing at J——'s monster concerts next week. She was to have sung sooner, but it seems some hitch has occurred—a quarrel between Monsieur Svengali and his first violin, who is a very important person.

A crowd of people as usual, only bigger, is assembled in front of the windows of the Stereoscopic Com-

pany in Regent Street, gazing at presentments of Madame Svengali in all sizes and costumes. She is very beautiful—there is no doubt of that; and the expression of her face is sweet and kind and sad, and of such a distinction that one feels an imperial crown would become her even better than her modest little coronet of golden stars. One of the photographs represents her in classical dress, with her left foot on a little stool, in something of the attitude of the Venus of Milo, except that her hands are clasped behind her back; and the foot is bare but for a Greek sandal, and so smooth and delicate and charming, and with so rhythmical a set and curl of the five slender toes (the big one slightly tip-tilted and well apart from its longer and slighter and more aquiline neighbor), that this presentment of her sells quicker than all the rest.

And a little man who, with two bigger men, has just forced his way in front says to one of his friends: "Look, Sandy, look—*the foot!* Now have you got any doubts?"

"Oh yes—those are Trilby's toes, sure enough!" says Sandy. And they all go in and purchase largely.

As far as I have been able to discover, the row between Svengali and his first violin had occurred at a rehearsal in Drury Lane Theatre.

Svengali, it seems, had never been quite the same since the 15th of October previous, and that was the day he had got his face slapped and his nose tweaked by Taffy in Paris. He had become short-tempered and irritable, especially with his wife (if she *was* his wife). Svengali, it seems, had reasons for passionately hating Little Billee.

He had not seen him for five years—not since the Christmas festivity in the Place St. Anatole, when they had sparred together after supper, and Svengali's nose had got in the way on this occasion, and had been made to bleed; but that was not why he hated Little Billee.

When he caught sight of him standing on the curb in the Place de la Concorde and watching the procession of "tout Paris," he knew him directly, and all his hate flared up; he cut him dead, and made his wife do the same.

Next morning he saw him again in the hotel post-office, looking small and weak and flurried, and apparently alone; and being an Oriental Israelite Hebrew Jew, he had not been able to resist the temptation of spitting in his face, since he must not throttle him to death.

The minute he had done this he had regretted the folly of it. Little Billee had run after him, and kicked and struck him, and he had returned the blow and drawn blood; and then, suddenly and quite unexpectedly, had come upon the scene that apparition so loathed and dreaded of old—the pig-headed Yorkshireman—the huge British philistine, the irresponsible bull, the junker, the ex-Crimean, Front-de-Bœuf, who had always reminded him of the brutal and contemptuous sword-clanking, spur-jingling aristocrats of his own country—ruffians that treated Jews like dogs. Callous as he was to the woes of others, the self-indulgent and highly-strung musician was extra sensitive about himself—a very bundle of nerves—and especially sensitive to pain and rough usage, and by

no means physically brave. The stern, choleric, invincible blue eye of the hated Northern gentile had cowed him at once. And that violent tweaking of his nose, that heavy open-handed blow on his face, had so shaken and demoralized him that he had never recovered from it.

He was thinking about it always—night and day—and constantly dreaming at night that he was being tweaked and slapped over again by a colossal nightmare Taffy, and waking up in agonies of terror, rage, and shame. All healthy sleep had forsaken him.

Moreover, he was much older than he looked—nearly fifty—and far from sound. His life had been a long, hard struggle.

He had for his wife, slave, and pupil a fierce, jealous kind of affection that was a source of endless torment to him; for indelibly graven in her heart, which he wished to occupy alone, was the never-fading image of the little English painter, and of this she made no secret.

Gecko no longer cared for the master. All Gecko's doglike devotion was concentrated on the slave and pupil, whom he worshipped with a fierce but pure and unselfish passion. The only living soul that Svengali could trust was the old Jewess who lived with them—his relative—but even she had come to love the pupil as much as the master.

On the occasion of this rehearsal at Drury Lane he (Svengali) was conducting and Madame Svengali was singing. He interrupted her several times, angrily and most unjustly, and told her she was singing out

of tune, "like a verfluchter tomcat," which was quite untrue. She was singing beautifully, "Home, Sweet Home."

Finally he struck her two or three smart blows on her knuckles with his little bâton, and she fell on her knees, weeping and crying out:

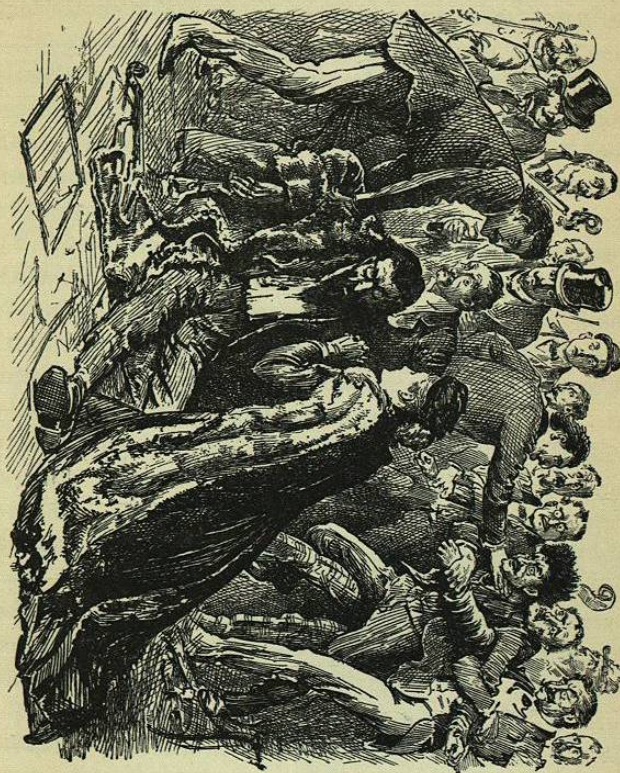
"Oh! oh! Svengali! ne me battez pas, mon ami—je fais tout ce que je peux!"

On which little Gecko had suddenly jumped up and struck Svengali on the neck near the collar-bone, and then it was seen that he had a little bloody knife in his hand, and blood flowed from Svengali's neck, and at the sight of it Svengali had fainted; and Madame Svengali had taken his head on her lap, looking dazed and stupefied, as in a waking dream.

Gecko had been disarmed, but as Svengali recovered from his faint and was taken home, the police had not been sent for, and the affair was hushed up, and a public scandal avoided. But la Svengali's first appearance, to Monsieur J——'s despair, had to be put off for a week. For Svengali would not allow her to sing without him; nor, indeed, would he be parted from her for a minute, or trust her out of his sight.

The wound was a slight one. The doctor who attended Svengali described the wife as being quite imbecile, no doubt from grief and anxiety. But she never left her husband's bedside for a moment, and had the obedience and devotion of a dog.

When the night came round for the postponed début, Svengali was allowed by the doctor to go to the theatre, but he was absolutely forbidden to conduct.



THE FIRST VIOLIN LOSES HIS TEMPER

His grief and anxiety at this were uncontrollable; he raved like a madman; and Monsieur J—— was almost as bad.

Monsieur J—— had been conducting the Svengali band at rehearsals during the week, in the absence of its master—an easy task. It had been so thoroughly drilled and knew its business so well that it could almost conduct itself, and it had played all the music it had to play (much of which consisted of accompaniments to la Svengali's songs) many times before. Her répertoire was immense, and Svengali had written these orchestral scores with great care and felicity.

On the famous night it was arranged that Svengali should sit in a box alone, exactly opposite his wife's place on the platform, where she could see him well; and a code of simple signals was arranged between him and Monsieur J—— and the band, so that virtually he might conduct, himself, from his box should any hesitation or hitch occur. This arrangement was rehearsed the day before (a Sunday) and had turned out quite successfully, and la Svengali had sung in perfection in the empty theatre.

When Monday evening arrived everything seemed to be going smoothly; the house was soon crammed to suffocation, all but the middle box on the grand tier. It was not a promenade concert, and the pit was turned into guinea stalls (the promenade concerts were to begin a week later).

Right in the middle of these stalls sat the Laird and Taffy and Little Billee.

The band came in by degrees and tuned their instruments.

Eyes were constantly being turned to the empty box, and people wondered what royal personages would appear.

Monsieur J—— took his place amid immense applause, and bowed in his inimitable way, looking often at the empty box.

Then he tapped and waved his bâton, and the band played its Hungarian dance music with immense success; when this was over there was a pause, and soon some signs of impatience from the gallery. Monsieur J—— had disappeared.

Taffy stood up, his back to the orchestra, looking round.

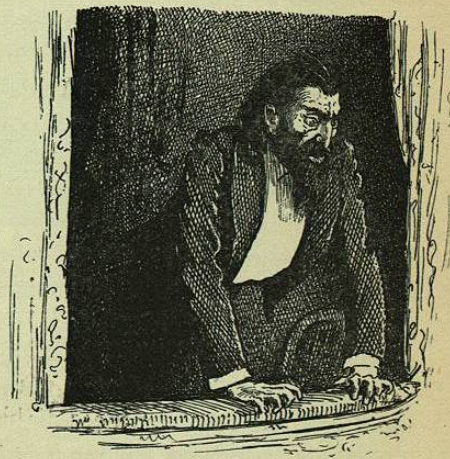
Some one came into the empty box, and stood for a moment in front, gazing at the house. A tall man, deathly pale, with long black hair and a beard.

It was Svengali.

He caught sight of Taffy and met his eyes, and Taffy said: "Good God! Look! look!"

Then Little Billee and the Laird got up and looked.

And Svengali for a moment glared at them. And the expression of his face was so terrible with wonder, rage, and fear that they were



"HAST THOU FOUND ME, O MINE ENEMY?"

quite appalled—and then he sat down, still glaring at Taffy, the whites of his eyes showing at the top, and his teeth bared in a spasmodic grin of hate.

Then thunders of applause filled the house, and turning round and seating themselves, Taffy and Little Billee and the Laird saw Trilby being led by J— down the platform, between the players, to the front, her face smiling rather vacantly, her eyes anxiously intent on Svengali in his box.

She made her bows to right and left just as she had done in Paris.

The band struck up the opening bars of "Ben Bolt," with which she was announced to make her début.

She still stared—but she didn't sing—and they played the little symphony three times.

One could hear Monsieur J—in a hoarse, anxious whisper saying,

"Mais chantez donc, madame—pour l'amour de Dieu, commencez donc—commencez!"

She turned round with an extraordinary expression of face, and said,

"Chanter? pourquoi donc voulez-vous que je chante, moi? chanter quoi, alors?"

"Mais 'Ben Bolt,' parbleu—chantez!"

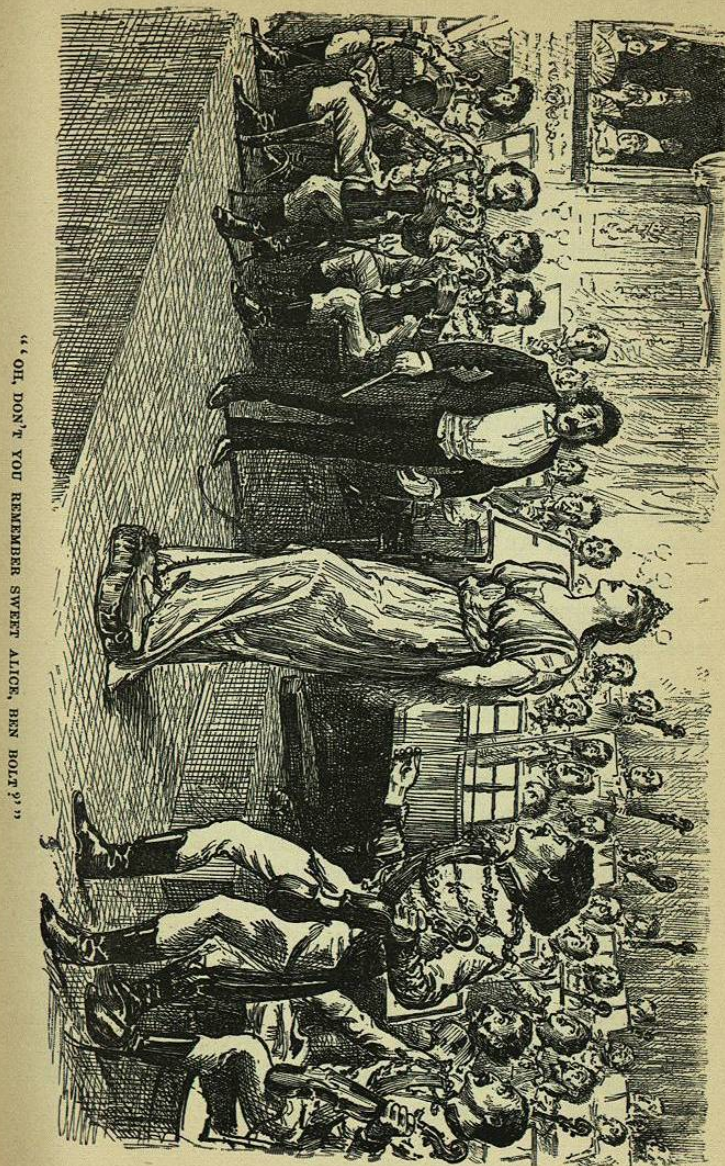
"Ah—'Ben Bolt!' oui—je connais ça!"

Then the band began again.

And she tried, but failed to begin herself. She turned round and said,

"Comment diable voulez-vous que je chante avec tout ce train qu'ils font, ces diables de musiciens!"

"Mais, mon Dieu, madame—qu'est-ce que vous avez donc?" cried Monsieur J—.



“OH, DON'T YOU REMEMBER SWEET ALICE, BEN BOLT?”

"J'ai que j'aime mieux chanter sans toute cette satanée musique, parbleu! J'aime mieux chanter toute seule!"

"Sans musique, alors—mais chantez—chantez!"

The band was stopped—the house was in a state of indescribable wonder and suspense.

She looked all round, and down at herself, and fingered her dress. Then she looked up to the chandelier with a tender, sentimental smile and began:

"Oh, don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?"

Sweet Alice with hair so brown,

Who wept with delight when you gave her a smile—"

She had not got further than this when the whole house was in an uproar—shouts from the gallery—shouts of laughter, hoots, hisses, catcalls, cock-crows.

She stopped and glared like a brave lioness, and called out:

"Qu'est-ce que vous avez donc, tous! tas de vieilles pommes cuites que vous êtes! Est-ce qu'on a peur de vous?" and then, suddenly:

"Why, you're all English, aren't you?—what's all the row about?—what have you brought me here for?—what have I done, I should like to know?"

And in asking these questions the depth and splendor of her voice were so extraordinary—its tone so pathetically feminine, yet so full of hurt and indignant command, that the tumult was stilled for a moment.

It was the voice of some being from another world—some insulted daughter of a race more puissant and nobler than ours; a voice that seemed as if it could never utter a false note.

Then came a voice from the gods in answer:

"Oh, ye're Henglish, har yer? Why don't yer sing as yer *hought* to sing—yer've got *voice* enough, any-ow! why don't yer sing in *tune*?"

"Sing in *tune*!" cried Trilby. "I didn't want to sing at all—I only sang because I was asked to sing—that gentleman asked me—that French gentleman with the white waistcoat! I won't sing another note!"

"Oh, yer won't, won't yer! then let us 'ave our money back, or we'll know what for!"

And again the din broke out, and the uproar was frightful.

Monsieur J—screamed out across the theatre: "Svengali! Svengali! qu'est-ce qu'elle a donc, votre femme? . . . Elle est devenue folle!"

Indeed she had tried to sing "Ben Bolt," but had sung it in her old way—as she used to sing it in the quartier latin—the most lamentably grotesque performance ever heard out of a human throat!

"Svengali! Svengali!" shrieked poor Monsieur J—, gesticulating towards the box where Svengali was sitting, quite impassible, gazing at Monsieur J—, and smiling a ghastly, sardonic smile, a rictus of hate and triumphant revenge—as if he were saying,

"I've got the laugh of you *all*, this time!"

Taffy, the Laird, Little Billee, the whole house, were now staring at Svengali, and his wife was forgotten.

She stood vacantly looking at everybody and everything—the chandelier, Monsieur J—, Svengali in his box, the people in the stalls, in the gallery—and smiling as if the noisy scene amused and excited her.

"Svengali! Svengali! Svengali!"