

They had not failed to note how rapidly she had aged, now that they had seen her without her rouge and pearl-powder; she looked thirty at least—she was only twenty-three.

Her hands were almost transparent in their waxen whiteness; delicate little frosty wrinkles had gathered round her eyes; there were gray streaks in her hair; all strength and straightness and elasticity seemed to have gone out of her with the memory of her endless triumphs (if she really *was* la Svengali), and of her many wanderings from city to city all over Europe.

It was evident enough that the sudden stroke which had destroyed her power of singing had left her physically a wreck.

But she was one of those rarely gifted beings who cannot look or speak or even stir without waking up (and satisfying) some vague longing that lies dormant in the hearts of most of us, men and women alike; grace, charm, magnetism—whatever the nameless seduction should be called that she possessed to such an unusual degree—she had lost none of it when she lost her high spirits, her buoyant health and energy, her wits!

Tuneless and insane, she was more of a siren than ever—a quite unconscious siren—without any guile, who appealed to the heart all the more directly and irresistibly that she could no longer stir the passions.

All this was keenly felt by all three—each in his different way—by Taffy and Little Billee especially.

All her past life was forgiven—her sins of omission and commission! And whatever might be her fate—recovery, madness, disease, or death—the care of her

till she died or recovered should be the principal business of their lives.

Both had loved her. All three, perhaps. One had been loved by her as passionately, as purely, as unselfishly, as any man could wish to be loved, and in some extraordinary manner had recovered, after many years, at the mere sudden sight and sound of her, his lost share in our common inheritance—the power to love, and all its joy and sorrow; without which he had found life not worth living, though he had possessed every other gift and blessing in such abundance.

“Oh, Circe, poor Circe, dear Circe, divine enchantress that you were!” he said to himself, in his excitable way. “A mere look from your eyes, a mere note of your heavenly voice, has turned a poor, miserable, callous brute back into a man again! and I will never forget it—never! And now that a still worse trouble than mine has befallen you, you shall always be first in my thoughts till the end!”

And Taffy felt pretty much the same, though he was not by way of talking to himself so eloquent about things as Little Billee.

As they lunched, they read the accounts of the previous evening's events in different papers, three or four of which (including the *Times*) had already got leaders about the famous but unhappy singer who had been so suddenly widowed and struck down in the midst of her glory. All these accounts were more or less correct. In one paper it was mentioned that Madame Svengali was under the roof and care of Mr. William Bagot, the painter, in Fitzroy Square.

The inquest on Svengali was to take place that afternoon, and also Gecko's examination at the Bow Street Police Court, for his assault.

Taffy was allowed to see Gecko, who was remanded till the result of the post-mortem should be made pub-



"TAFFY WAS ALLOWED TO SEE GECKO"

lic. But beyond inquiring most anxiously and minutely after Trilby, and betraying the most passionate concern for her, he would say nothing, and seemed indifferent as to his own fate.

When they went to Fitzroy Square, late in the after-

noon, they found that many people, musical, literary, fashionable, and otherwise (and many foreigners), had called to inquire after Madame Svengali, but no one had been admitted to see her. Mrs. Godwin was much elated by the importance of her new lodger.

Trilby had been writing to Angèle Boisse, at her old address in the Rue des Cloîtres Ste. Pètronille, in the hope that this letter would find her still there. She was anxious to go back and be a blanchisseuse de fin with her friend. It was a kind of nostalgia for Paris, the quartier latin, her clean old trade.

This project our three heroes did not think it necessary to discuss with her just yet; she seemed quite unfit for work of any kind.

The doctor, who had seen her again, had been puzzled by her strange physical weakness, and wished for a consultation with some special authority; Little Billee, who was intimate with most of the great physicians, wrote about her to Sir Oliver Calthorpe.

She seemed to find a deep happiness in being with her three old friends, and talked and listened with all her old eagerness and geniality, and much of her old gayety, in spite of her strange and sorrowful position. But for this it was impossible to realize that her brain was affected in the slightest degree, except when some reference was made to her singing, and this seemed to annoy and irritate her, as though she were being made fun of. The whole of her marvellous musical career, and everything connected with it, had been clean wiped out of her recollection.

She was very anxious to get into other quarters, that Little Billee should suffer no inconvenience, and

they promised to take rooms for her and Marta on the morrow.

They told her cautiously all about Svengali and Gecko; she was deeply concerned, but betrayed no such poignant anguish as might have been expected. The thought of Gecko troubled her most, and she showed much anxiety as to what might befall him.

Next day she moved with Marta to some lodgings in Charlotte Street, where everything was made as comfortable for them as possible.

Sir Oliver saw her with Dr. Thorne (the doctor who was attending her) and Sir Jacob Wilcox.

Sir Oliver took the greatest interest in her case, both for her sake and his friend Little Billee's. Also his own, for he was charmed with her. He saw her three times in the course of the week, but could not say for certain what was the matter with her, beyond taking the very gravest view of her condition. For all he could advise or prescribe, her weakness and physical prostration increased rapidly, through no cause he could discover. Her insanity was not enough to account for it. She lost weight daily; she seemed to be wasting and fading away from sheer general atrophy.

Two or three times he took her and Marta for a drive.

On one of these occasions, as they went down Charlotte Street, she saw a shop with transparent French blinds in the window, and through them some French women, with neat white caps, ironing. It was a French *blanchisserie de fin*, and the sight of it interested and excited her so much that she must needs insist on being put down and on going into it.

"Je voudrais bien parler à la patronne, si ça ne la dérange pas," she said.

The patronne, a genial Parisian, was much astonished to hear a great French lady, in costly garments,



A FAIR BLANCHISSEUSE DE FIN

evidently a person of fashion and importance, applying to her rather humbly for employment in the business, and showing a thorough knowledge of the work (and of the Parisian work-woman's colloquial dialect). Marta managed to catch the patronne's eye, and

tapped her own forehead significantly, and Sir Oliver nodded. So the good woman humored the great lady's fancy, and promised her abundance of employment whenever she should want it.

Employment! Poor Trilby was hardly strong enough to walk back to the carriage; and this was her last outing.

But this little adventure had filled her with hope and good spirits—for she had as yet received no answer from Angèle Boisse (who was in Marseilles), and had begun to realize how dreary the quartier latin would be without Jeannot, without Angèle, without the trois Angliches in the Place St. Anatole des Arts.

She was not allowed to see any of the strangers who came and made kind inquiries. This her doctors had strictly forbidden. Any reference to music or singing irritated her beyond measure. She would say to Marta, in bad German:

"Tell them, Marta—what nonsense it is! They are taking me for another—they are mad. They are trying to make a fool of me!"

And Marta would betray great uneasiness—almost terror—when she was appealed to in this way.

### Part Eighth

"La vie est vaine :  
Un peu d'amour,  
Un peu de haine. . . .  
Et puis—bonjour !

"La vie est brève :  
Un peu d'espoir,  
Un peu de rêve. . . .  
Et puis—bonsoir."

SVENGALI had died from heart-disease. The cut he had received from Gecko had not apparently (as far as the verdict of a coroner's inquest could be trusted) had any effect in aggravating his malady or hastening his death.

But Gecko was sent for trial at the Old Bailey, and sentenced to hard labor for six months (a sentence which, if I remember aright, gave rise to much comment at the time). Taffy saw him again, but with no better result than before. He chose to preserve an obstinate silence on his relations with the Svengalis and their relations with each other.

When he was told how hopelessly ill and insane Madame Svengali was, he shed a few tears, and said: "Ah, pauvrete, pauvrete—ah! monsieur—je l'aimais tant, je l'aimais tant! il n'y en a pas beaucoup comme elle, Dieu de misère! C'est un ange du Paradis!"

And not another word was to be got out of him.