

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.

It took some time to settle Svengali's affairs after his death. No will was found. His old mother came over from Germany, and two of his sisters, but no wife. The comic wife and the three children, and the sweet-stuff shop in Elberfeld, had been humorous inventions of his own—a kind of Mrs. Harris!

He left three thousand pounds, every penny of which (and of far larger sums that he had spent) had been earned by "la Svengali," but nothing came to Trilby of this; nothing but the clothes and jewels he had given her, and in this respect he had been lavish enough; and there were countless costly gifts from emperors, kings, great people of all kinds. Trilby was under the impression that all these belonged to Marta. Marta behaved admirably; she seemed bound hand and foot to Trilby by a kind of slavish adoration, as that of a plain old mother for a brilliant and beautiful but dying child.

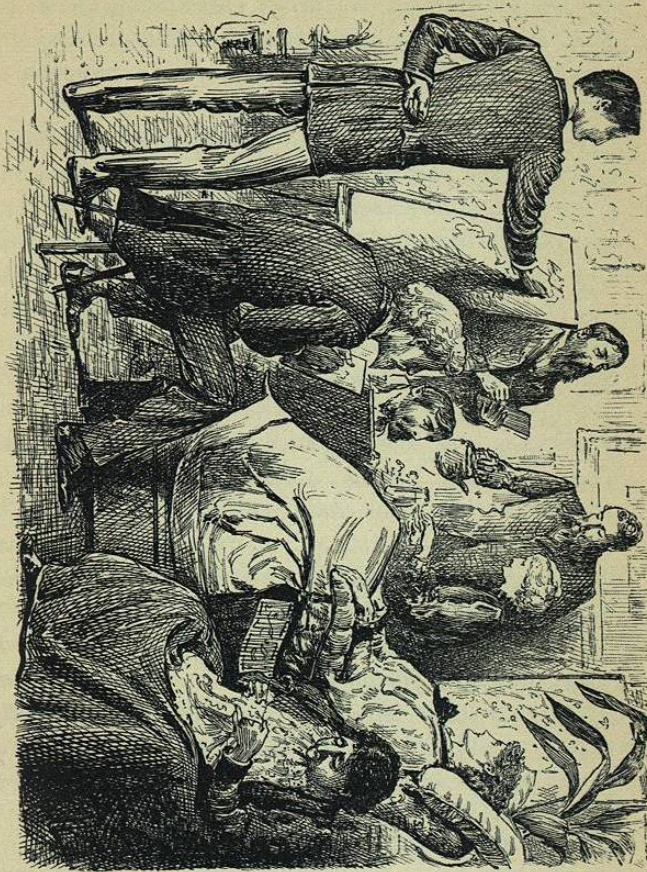
It soon became evident that, whatever her disease might be, Trilby had but a very short time to live.

She was soon too weak even to be taken out in a Bath-chair, and remained all day in her large sitting-room with Marta; and there, to her great and only joy, she received her three old friends every afternoon, and gave them coffee, and made them smoke cigarettes of caporal as of old; and their hearts were daily harrowed as they watched her rapid decline.

Day by day she grew more beautiful in their eyes, in spite of her increasing pallor and emaciation—her skin was so pure and white and delicate, and the bones of her face so admirable!

Her eyes recovered all their old humorous bright-

A THRONE IN BOHEMIA



ness when les trois Angliches were with her, and the expression of her face was so wistful and tender for all her playfulness, so full of eager clinging to existence and to them, that they felt the memory of it would haunt them forever, and be the sweetest and saddest memory of their lives.

Her quick, though feeble gestures, full of reminiscences of the vigorous and lively girl they had known a few years back, sent waves of pity through them and pure brotherly love; and the incomparable tones and changes and modulations of her voice, as she chatted and laughed, bewitched them almost as much as when she had sung the "Nussbaum" of Schumann in the Salle des Bashibazoucks.

Sometimes Lorrimer came, and Antony and the Greek. It was like a genial little court of bohemia. And Lorrimer, Antony, the Laird, and Little Billee made those beautiful chalk and pencil studies of her head which are now so well known—all so singularly like her, and so singularly unlike each other! *Trilby vue à travers quatre tempéraments!*

These afternoons were probably the happiest poor Trilby had ever spent in her life—with these dear people round her, speaking the language she loved; talking of old times and jolly Paris days, she never thought of the morrow.

But later—at night, in the small hours—she would wake up with a start from some dream full of tender and blissful recollection, and suddenly realize her own mischance, and feel the icy hand of that which was to come before many morrows were over; and taste the bitterness of death so keenly that she longed to scream

out loud, and get up, and walk up and down, and wring her hands at the dreadful thought of parting forever!

But she lay motionless and mum as a poor little frightened mouse in a trap, for fear of waking up the good old tired Marta, who was snoring at her side.

And in an hour or two the bitterness would pass away, the creeps and the horrors; and the stoical spirit of resignation would steal over her—the balm, the blessed calm! and all her old bravery would come back.

And then she would sink into sleep again, and dream more blissfully than ever, till the good Marta woke her with a motherly kiss and a fragrant cup of coffee; and she would find, feeble as she was, and doomed as she felt herself to be, that joy cometh of a morning; and life was still sweet for her, with yet a whole day to look forward to.

One day she was deeply moved at receiving a visit from Mrs. Bagot, who, at Little Billee's earnest desire, had come all the way from Devonshire to see her.

As the graceful little lady came in, pale and trembling all over, Trilby rose from her chair to receive her, and rather timidly put out her hand, and smiled in a frightened manner. Neither could speak for a second. Mrs. Bagot stood stock-still by the door gazing (with all her heart in her eyes) at the so terribly altered Trilby—the girl she had once so dreaded.

Trilby, who seemed also bereft of motion, and whose face and lips were ashen, exclaimed, "I'm afraid I haven't quite kept my promise to you, after all! but

things have turned out so differently! anyhow, you needn't have any fear of me *now*."

At the mere sound of that voice, Mrs. Bagot, who was as impulsive, emotional, and unregulated as her



"OH, MY POOR GIRL! MY POOR GIRL!"

son, rushed forward, crying, "Oh, my poor girl, my poor girl!" and caught her in her arms, and kissed and caressed her, and burst into a flood of tears, and forced her back into her chair, hugging her as if she were a long-lost child.

"I love you now as much as I always admired you—pray believe it!"

"Oh, how kind of you to say that!" said Trilby, her own eyes filling. "I'm not at all the dangerous or designing person you thought. I knew quite well I wasn't a proper person to marry your son all the time; and told him so again and again. It was very stupid of me to say yes at last. I was miserable directly after, I assure you. Somehow I couldn't help myself—I was driven."

"Oh, don't talk of that! don't talk of that! You've never been to blame in any way—I've long known it—I've been full of remorse! You've been in my thoughts always, night and day. Forgive a poor jealous mother. As if *any* man could help loving you—or any woman either. Forgive me!"

"Oh, Mrs. Bagot—forgive *you*! What a funny idea! But, anyhow, you've forgiven *me*, and that's all I care for now. I was very fond of your son—as fond as could be. I am now, but in quite a different sort of way, you know—the sort of way *you* must be, I fancy! There was never another like him that I ever met—anywhere! You *must* be so proud of him; who wouldn't? *Nobody's* good enough for him. I would have been only too glad to be his servant, his humble servant! I used to tell him so—but he wouldn't hear of it—he was much too kind! He always thought of others before himself. And, oh! how rich and famous he's become! I've heard all about it, and it did me good. It does me more good to think of than anything else; far more than if I were to be ever so rich and famous myself, I can tell you!"

This from la Svengali, whose overpowering fame, so utterly forgotten by herself, was still ringing all over

Europe; whose lamentable illness and approaching death were being mourned and discussed and commented upon in every capital of the civilized world, as one distressing bulletin appeared after another. She might have been a royal personage!

Mrs. Bagot knew, of course, the strange form her insanity had taken, and made no allusion to the flood of thoughts that rushed through her own brain as she listened to this towering goddess of song, this poor mad queen of the nightingales, humbly gloating over her son's success. . . .

Poor Mrs. Bagot had just come from Little Billee's, in Fitzroy Square, close by. There she had seen Taffy, in a corner of Little Billee's studio, laboriously answering endless letters and telegrams from all parts of Europe—for the good Taffy had constituted himself Trilby's secretary and *homme d'affaires*—unknown to her, of course. And this was no sinecure (though he liked it): putting aside the numerous people he had to see and be interviewed by, there were kind inquiries and messages of condolence and sympathy from nearly all the crowned heads of Europe, through their chamberlains; applications for help from unsuccessful musical strugglers all over the world to the pre-eminently successful one; beautiful letters from great and famous people, musical or otherwise; disinterested offers of service; interested proposals for engagements when the present trouble should be over; beggings for an interview from famous impresarios, to obtain which no distance would be thought too great, etc., etc., etc. It was endless, in English, French, German, Italian—in languages quite incomprehensible (many letters had

to remain unanswered)—Taffy took an almost malicious pleasure in explaining all this to Mrs. Bagot.

Then there was a constant rolling of carriages up to the door, and a thundering of Little Billee's knocker: Lord and Lady Palmerston wish to know—the Lord Chief Justice wishes to know—the Dean of Westminster wishes to know—the Marchioness of Westminster wishes to know—everybody wishes to know if there is any better news of Madame Svengali!

These were small things, truly; but Mrs. Bagot was a small person from a small village in Devonshire, and one whose heart and eye had hitherto been filled by no larger image than that of Little Billee; and Little Billee's fame, as she now discovered for the first time, did not quite fill the entire universe.

And she mustn't be too much blamed if all these obvious signs of a world-wide colossal celebrity impressed and even awed her a little.

Madame Svengali! Why, this was the beautiful girl whom she remembered so well, whom she had so grandly discarded with a word, and who had accepted her congé so meekly in a minute; whom, indeed, she had been cursing in her heart for years, because—because what?

Poor Mrs. Bagot felt herself turn hot and red all over, and humbled herself to the very dust, and almost forgot that she had been in the right, after all, and that "la grande Trilby" was certainly no fit match for her son!

So she went quite humbly to see Trilby, and found a poor pathetic mad creature still more humble than herself, who still apologized for—for what?

A poor, pathetic, mad creature who had clean forgotten that she was the greatest singer in all the world—one of the greatest artists that had ever lived; but who remembered with shame and contrition that she had once taken the liberty of yielding (after endless pressure and repeated disinterested refusals of her own, and out of sheer irresistible affection) to the passionate pleadings of a little obscure art student, a mere boy—no better off than herself—just as penniless and insignificant a nobody; but—the son of Mrs. Bagot.

All due sense of proportion died out of the poor lady as she remembered and realized all this!

And then Trilby's pathetic beauty, so touching, so winning, in its rapid decay; the nameless charm of look and voice and manner that was her special apnage, and which her malady and singular madness had only increased; her childlike simplicity, her transparent forgetfulness of self—all these so fascinated and entranced Mrs. Bagot, whose quick susceptibility to such impressions was just as keen as her son's, that she very soon found herself all but worshipping this fast-fading lily—for so she called her in her own mind—quite forgetting (or affecting to forget) on what very questionable soil the lily had been reared, and through what strange vicissitudes of evil and corruption it had managed to grow so tall and white and fragrant!

Oh, strange compelling power of weakness and grace and prettiness combined, and sweet, sincere unconscious natural manners! not to speak of world-wide fame!

For Mrs. Bagot was just a shrewd little conventional British country matron of the good upper middle-class type, bristling all over with provincial proprieties and respectabilities, a philistine of the philistines, in spite of her artistic instincts; one who for years had (rather unjustly) thought of Trilby as a wanton and perilous siren, an unchaste and unprincipled and most dangerous daughter of Heth, and the special enemy of her house.

And here she was—like all the rest of us monads and nomads and bohemians—just sitting at Trilby's feet. . . . "A washer-woman! a figure model! and Heaven knows what besides!" and she had never even heard her sing!

It was truly comical to see and hear!

Mrs. Bagot did not go back to Devonshire. She remained in Fitzroy Square, at her son's, and spent most of her time with Trilby, doing and devising all kinds of things to distract and amuse her, and lead her thoughts gently to heaven, and soften for her the coming end of all.

Trilby had a way of saying, and especially of looking, "Thank you" that made one wish to do as many things for her as one could, if only to make her say and look it again.

And she had retained much of her old, quaint, and amusing manner of telling things, and had much to tell still left of her wandering life, although there were so many strange lapses in her powers of memory—gaps—which, if they could only have been filled up, would have been full of such surpassing interest!

Then she was never tired of talking and hearing of Little Billee; and that was a subject of which Mrs. Bagot could never tire either!

Then there were the recollections of her childhood. One day, in a drawer, Mrs. Bagot came upon a faded daguerreotype of a woman in a Tam o' Shanter, with a face so sweet and beautiful and saint-like that

it almost took her breath away. It was Trilby's mother.

"Who and what was your mother, Trilby?"

"Ah, poor mamma!" said Trilby, and she looked at the portrait a long time. "Ah, she was ever so much prettier than that! Mamma was once a demoiselle de comptoir—that's a barmaid, you know—at the Montagnards Écossais, in the Rue



"AH, POOR MAMMA! SHE WAS EVER SO MUCH PRETTIER THAN THAT!"

du Paradis Poissonnière—a place where men used to drink and smoke without sitting down. That was unfortunate, wasn't it?

"Papa loved her with all his heart, although, of course, she wasn't his equal. They were married at the Embassy, in the Rue du Faubourg St.-Honoré.

"Her parents weren't married at all. Her mother was the daughter of a boatman on Loch Ness, near a place called Drumnadrochit; but her father was the Honorable Colonel Desmond. He was related to all sorts of great people in England and Ireland. He behaved very badly to my grandmother and to poor mamma—his own daughter! deserted them both! Not very *honorable* of him, *was* it. And that's all I know about him."

And then she went on to tell of the home in Paris that might have been so happy but for her father's passion for drink; of her parents' deaths, and little Jeannot, and so forth. And Mrs. Bagot was much moved and interested by these naïve revelations, which accounted in a measure for so much that seemed unaccountable in this extraordinary woman; who thus turned out to be a kind of cousin (though on the wrong side of the blanket) to no less a person than the famous Duchess of Towers.

With what joy would that ever kind and gracious lady have taken poor Trilby to her bosom had she only known! She had once been all the way from Paris to Vienna merely to hear her sing. But, unfortunately, the Svengalis had just left for St. Petersburg, and she had her long journey for nothing!

Mrs. Bagot brought her many good books, and read them to her—Dr. Cummings on the approaching end of the world, and other works of a like comforting tendency for those who are just about to leave it; the *Pilgrim's Progress*, sweet little tracts, and what not.

Trilby was so grateful that she listened with much patient attention. Only now and then a faint gleam of amusement would steal over her face, and her lips would almost form themselves to ejaculate, "Oh, maïe, aïe!"

Then Mrs. Bagot, as a reward for such winning docility, would read her *David Copperfield*, and that was heavenly indeed!

But the best of all was for Trilby to look over John Leech's *Pictures of Life and Character*, just out. She had never seen any drawings of Leech before, except now and then in an occasional *Punch* that turned up in the studio in Paris. And they never palled upon her, and taught her more of the aspect of English life (the life she loved) than any book she had ever read. She laughed and laughed; and it was almost as sweet to listen to as if she were vocalizing the quick part in Chopin's Impromptu.

One day she said, her lips trembling: "I can't make out why you're so wonderfully kind to me, Mrs. Bagot. I hope you have not forgotten who and what I am, and what my story is. I hope you haven't forgotten that I'm not a respectable woman?"

"Oh, my dear child—don't ask me . . . I only know that you are you! . . . and I am I! and that is enough for me . . . you're my poor, gentle, patient, suffering daughter, whatever else you are—more sinned against than sinning, I feel sure! But there . . . I've misjudged you so, and been so unjust, that I would give worlds to make you some amends . . . besides, I should be just as fond of you if you'd committed a murder, I

really believe—you're so strange! you're irresistible! Did you ever, in all your life, meet anybody that *wasn't* fond of you?"

Trilby's eyes moistened with tender pleasure at such a pretty compliment. Then, after a few minutes' thought, she said, with engaging candor and quite simply: "No, I can't say I ever did, that I can think of just now. But I've forgotten such lots of people!"

One day Mrs. Bagot told Trilby that her brother-in-law, Mr. Thomas Bagot, would much like to come and talk to her.

"Was that the gentleman who came with you to the studio in Paris?"

"Yes."

"Why, he's a clergyman, isn't he? What does he want to come and talk to *me* about?"

"Ah! my dear child . . ." said Mrs. Bagot, her eyes filling.

Trilby was thoughtful for a while, and then said: "I'm going to die, I suppose. Oh yes! oh yes! There's no mistake about that!"

"Dear Trilby, we are all in the hands of an Almighty Merciful God!" And the tears rolled down Mrs. Bagot's cheeks.

After a long pause, during which she gazed out of the window, Trilby said, in an abstracted kind of way, as though she were talking to herself: "Après tout, c'est pas déjà si raide, de claquer! J'en ai tant vus, qui ont passé par la! Au bout du fossé la culbute, ma foi!"

"What are you saying to yourself in French, Trilby? Your French is so difficult to understand!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon! I was thinking it's not so difficult to die, after all! I've seen such lots of people do it. I've nursed them, you know—papa and mamma and Jeannot, and Angèle Boisse's mother-in-law, and a poor casseur de pierres, Colin Maigret, who lived in the Impasse des Taupes St. Germain. He'd been run over by an omnibus in the Rue Vaugirard, and had to have both his legs cut off just above the knee. They none of them seemed to mind dying a bit. They weren't a bit afraid! *I'm* not!"

"Poor people don't think much of death. Rich people shouldn't either. They should be taught when they're quite young to laugh at it and despise it, like the Chinese. The Chinese die of laughing just as their heads are being cut off, and cheat the executioner! It's all in the day's work, and we're all in the same boat—so who's afraid!"

"Dying is not all, my poor child! Are you prepared to meet your Maker face to face? Have you ever thought about God, and the possible wrath to come if you should die unrepentant?"

"Oh, but I sha'n't! I've been repenting all my life! Besides, there'll be no wrath for any of us—not even the worst! *Il y aura amnistie générale!* Papa told me so, and he'd been a clergyman, like Mr. Thomas Bagot. I often think about God. I'm very fond of Him. One *must* have something perfect to look up to and be fond of—even if it's only an idea!

"Though some people don't even believe He exists! Le père Martin didn't—but, of course, *he* was only a chiffonnier, and doesn't count.

"One day, though, Durien, the sculptor, who's very clever, and a very good fellow indeed, said:

"'Vois-tu, Trilby—I'm very much afraid He doesn't really exist, le bon Dieu! most unfortunately for *me*, for I *adore* Him! I never do a piece of work without thinking how nice it would be if I could only please *Him* with it!"

"And I've often thought, myself, how heavenly it must be to be able to paint, or sculpt, or make music, or write beautiful poetry, for that very reason!

"Why, once on a very hot afternoon we were sitting, a lot of us, in the court-yard outside la mère Martin's shop, drinking coffee with an old Invalide called Bastide Lendormi, one of the Vieille Garde, who'd only got one leg and one arm and one eye, and everybody was very fond of him. Well, a model called Mimi la Salope came out of the Mont-de-piété opposite, and Père Martin called out to her to come and sit down, and gave her a cup of coffee, and asked her to sing.

"She sang a song of Béranger's, about Napoleon the Great, in which it says:

"'Parlez-nous de lui, grandmère!
Grandmère, parlez-nous de lui!"

I suppose she sang it very well, for it made old Bastide Lendormi cry; and when Père Martin *blaguè'd* him about it, he said,