

She seemed to beckon me to her with her eyes. I went to her side, and kissed her hand.

Fanny bent over me, and held her face near my lips, that I might whisper in her ear what I knew.

I told her all in a few words. She then bent over mother's pillow and whispered in her ear what she had heard from me.

Mother sighed and seemed to be calmed. Then grandmother bent over dear mother, that she might learn from her all that had been said.

As she heard it, her grey-headed figure straightened, and clasping her two hands above her head, she panted in wild prophetic ecstasy:

"O Lord God! who entrustest Thy will to children: may it come to pass, as Thou hast ordained!"

Then she came to me and embraced me.

"Did you counsel Lorand to go there?"

"I did."

"Did you know what you were doing? It was the will of God. Every day you must pray now for your brother."

"And you must keep silent for him. For when he is discovered, my brother will die and I cannot live without him."

The storm became calm: they again made peace with me. Mother, some minutes later, fell asleep, and slumbered sweetly. Grandmother motioned to Fanny and to me to leave her to herself.

We let down the window-blinds and left the room.

As we stepped out, I said to Fanny:

"Remember, my honor has been put into your hands."

The girl gazed into my eyes with ardent enthusiasm and said:

"I shall guard it as I guard mine own."

That was no child's answer, but the answer of a maiden.

CHAPTER XII

A GLANCE INTO A PISTOL-BARREL

THE weather changed very rapidly, for all the world as if two evil demons were fighting for the earth: one with fire, the other with ice. It was the middle of May; it had become so sultry that the earth, which last week had been frozen to dry bones, now began to crack.

The wanderer who disappeared from our sight we shall find on that plain of Lower Hungary, where there are as many high roads as cart-ruts.

It is evening, but the sun had just set, and left a cloudless ruddy sky behind it. On the horizon two or three towers are to be seen so far distant that the traveller who is hurrying before us cannot hope to reach any one of them by nightfall.

The dust had not so overlaid him, nor had the sun so tanned his face that we cannot recognize in these handsome noble features the pride of the youth of Pressburg, Lorand.

The long journey he has accomplished has evidently not impaired the strength of his muscles, for the horseman who is coming behind him, has to ride hard to overtake him.

The latter leaned back in his shortened stirrups, after the manner of hussars, and wore a silver-buttoned jacket, a greasy hat, and ragged red trousers. Thrown half over his shoulders was a garment of wolf-skins; around his waist was a wide belt from which two pistol-barrels gleamed, while in the leg of one of his boots a silver-chased knife was thrust. The horse's harness was glittering with silver, just as the ragged, stained garments of its master.

The rider approached at a trot, but the traveller had

not yet thought it worth while to look back and see who was coming after him. Presently he came up to the solitary figure, trudging along, doggedly.

"Good evening, student."

Lorand looked up at him.

"Good evening, gypsy."

At these words the horseman drew aside his skin-mantle that the student might see the pistol-barrels, and consider that even if he were a gypsy, he was something more than a mere musician. But Lorand did not betray the slightest emotion: he did not even take down from his shoulder the stick, on which he was carrying his boots. He was walking bare-footed. It was cheaper.

"Oh, you are proud of your red boots!" sneered the rider, looking down at Lorand's bare-feet.

"It's easy for you to say so," was Lorand's sharp reply; "sitting on that hack."

But "hack" means a kind of four-footed animal which this rider found no pleasure in hearing mentioned.*

"My own training," he said proudly, as if in self-defence against this cutting remark.

"I know. I knew that even in my scapegrace days."

"Well, and where are you hobbling to now, student?"

"I am going to Csege, gypsy, to preach."

"What do you get from the 'legatio' for that, student?"

"Twenty silver florins, gypsy."

"Do you know what, student? I have an idea—don't go just yet to Csege, but turn aside here to the shepherd's where you see that fold. Wait there for me till to-morrow, when I shall come back, and preach your sermon to me: I have never yet heard anything of the kind, and I'll give you forty florins for it."

*The Magyar word has a double meaning; besides a horse it means a peculiar whipping-bench with which gypsies used to be particularly well acquainted.

"Oh no, gypsy; do you turn aside to yonder fold. Don't go just now to the farm, but wait a week for me; when I shall come back; then you can fiddle my favorite tune, and I'll give you ten florins for it."

"I am no musician," replied the horseman, extending his chest.

"What's that rural fife doing at your side?" The gypsy roared at the idea of calling his musket a "rural fife!" Many had paid dearly so as not to hear its notes!

"You student, you are a deuce of a fellow. Take a draught from my 'noggin.'"

"No, thanks, gypsy; it isn't spiritual enough to go with my sermon."*

The gypsy laughed still more loudly.

"Well, good night, student."

He drove his spurs into his horse and galloped on along the high-road.

Then the evening drew in quietly. Lorand reached a grassy mound, shaded by juniper bushes. This spot he chose for his night-camp in preference to the wine-reeking, stenching rooms of the way-side inns. Putting on his boots, he drew from his wallet some bread and bacon, and commenced eating. He found it good: he was hungry and young.

Scarcely had he finished his repast when, along the same road on which the horseman had come, rapidly approached a five-in-hand. The three leaders were supplied with bells and their approach could be heard from afar off.

Lorand called out to the coachman,

"Stop a moment, fellow-countryman."

*Lorand really quoted a sentence from a popular ditty, but it is impossible in such cases to do proper justice to the original.

The whole passage between Lorand and the gypsy is full of allusions intelligible only to Hungarians, in *Hungarian*, a proper rendering of which, in my opinion, baffles all attempts. Of course the force of the original is lost, but it is unavoidable.

The coachman pulled up his horses.

"Quickly," he said to Lorand, with a hoarse voice, "get up at once, sir 'legatus,' beside me. The horses will not stand."

"That was not what I wanted to say," remarked Lorand. "I did not want to ask you to take me up, but to tell you to be on your guard, for a highwayman has just gone on in front, and it would be ill to meet with him."

"Have you much money?"

"No."

"Nor have I. Then why should we fear the robber?"

"Perhaps those who are sitting inside the carriage?"

"Her ladyship is sitting within and is now asleep. If I awake her and frighten her, and then we don't find the highwayman she will break the whip over my back. Get up here. It will be good to travel as far as Lankadomb in a carriage, 'sblood.'"

"Do you live at Lankadomb?" asked Lorand in a tone of surprise.

"Yes. I am Topándy's servant. He is a very fine fellow, and is very fond of people who preach."

"I know him by reputation."

"Well, if you know him by reputation, you will do well to make his personal acquaintance, too. Get up, now."

Lorand put the meeting down as a lucky chance. Topándy's weakness was to capture men of a priestly turn of mind, keep them at his house and annoy them. That was just what he wanted, a pretext for meeting him.

He clambered up beside the coachman and under the brilliance of the starry heaven, the five steeds, with merry tinkling of bells, rattled the carriage along the turf road.

The coachman told him they had come from Debreczen: they wished to reach Lankadomb in the morning, but on the way they would pass an inn, where the horses

would receive feed, while her ladyship would have some cold lunch: and then they would proceed on their journey. Her ladyship always loved to travel by night, for then it was not so hot: besides she was not afraid of anything.

It was about midnight when the carriage drew up at the inn mentioned.

Lorand leaped down from the box, and hastened first into the inn, not wishing to meet the lady who was within the carriage. His heart beat loudly, when he caught a glimpse of that silver-harnessed horse in the inn-yard, saddled and bridled. The steed was not fastened up, but quite loose, and it gave a peculiar neigh as the coach arrived, at which there stepped out from a dark door the same man whom Lorand had met on the plain.

He was utterly astonished to see Lorand.

"You are here already, student?"

"You can see it with your own eyes, gypsy."

"How did you come so quickly?"

"Why, I ride on a dragon: I am a necromancer."

By this time the occupants of the carriage had entered: her ladyship and a plump, red-faced maid-servant. The former was wrapped in a thick fur cloak, her head bound with a silken kerchief; the latter wore a short red mantle, fastened round her neck with a kerchief of many colors, while her hair was tied with ribbons. Her two hands were full of cold viands.

"So that was it, eh?" said the rider, as he perceived them. "They brought you in their carriage." Then he allowed the new-comers to enter the parlor peacefully, while he himself took his horse, and, leading it to the pump, pumped some water into the trough.

Lorand began to think he was not the rascal he thought him, and he now proceeded into the parlor.

Her ladyship threw back her fur cloak, took off the silken kerchief and put two candles before her. She trimmed them both, like one who "loves the beautiful."

You might have called her face very beautiful: she had lively, sparkling eyes, strong brown complexion,

rosy lips, and arched eyebrows: it was right that such light as there was in the room should burn before her.

In the darkness, on the long bench at the other end of the table, sat Lorand, who had ordered a bottle of wine, rather to avoid sitting there for nothing, than to drink the sour vintage of the Lowland.

Beside the bar, on a straw mattress, was sleeping a Slavonian pedler of holy images, and a wandering jack-of-all-trades; at the bar the bushy-headed host grinned with doubtful pleasure over such guests, who brought their own eatables and drinkables with them, and only came to show their importance.

Lorand had time enough calmly to take in this "ladyship," in whose carriage he had come so far, and under whose roof he would probably live later.

She must be a lively, good-natured creature. She shared every morsel with her servant, and sent what remained to the coachman. Perhaps if she had known she had another nameless travelling companion, she would have invited him to the repast. As she ate she poured some rye-whiskey into her tin plate; to this she added figs, raisins and sugar, and then lighted it. This beverage is called in our country "krampampuli." It must be very healthy on a night journey for a healthy stomach.

When the repast was over, the door leading to the courtyard opened: and there entered the rogue who had been left outside, his hat pressed over his eyes, and in his hand one of his pistols that he had taken from his girdle.

"Under the table! under the bed! all whose lives are dear to them!" he cried, standing in the doorway. At these terrible words the Slavonian and the other who were sleeping on the floor clambered up into the chimney-place, the host disappeared into the cellar, banging the door after him, while the servant hid herself under the bench; then the robber stepped up to the table and extinguished both candles with his hat, so that there remained no light on the table save that of the burning spirit.

The latter gave a weird light. When sugar burns in spirits, a sepulchral light appears on everything: living faces look like faces of the dead; all color disappears from them, the ruddiness of the countenance, the brilliance of the lips, the glitter of the eyes,—all turn green. It is as if phantoms rose from the grave and were gazing at one another.

Lorand watched the scene in horror.

This gay, smiling woman's face became at once like that of one raised from the tomb; and that other who stood face to face with her, weapon in hand, was like Death himself, with black beard and black eyelids.

Yet for one moment it seemed to Lorand as if both were laughing—the face of the dead and the face of Death, but it was only for a moment; and perhaps, too, that was merely an illusion.

Then the robber addressed her in a strong, authoritative voice:

"Your money, quickly!"

The woman took her purse, and without a word threw it down on the table before him.

The robber snatched it up and by the light of the spirit began to examine its contents.

"What is this?" he asked wrathfully.

"Money," replied the lady briefly, beginning to make a tooth-pick from a chicken bone with her silver-handled antique knife.

"Money! But how much?" bawled the thief.

"Four hundred florins."

"Four hundred florins," he shrieked, casting the purse down on the table. "Did I come here for four hundred florins? Have I been lounging about here a week for four hundred florins? Where is the rest?"

"The rest?" said the lady. "Oh, that is being made at Vienna."

"No joking, now. I know there were two thousand florins in this purse."

"If all that has ever been in that purse were here now, it would be enough for both of us."

"The devil take you!" cried the thief, beating the

table with his fist so that the spirit flame flickered in the plate. "I don't understand jokes. In this purse just now there were two thousand florins, the price of the wool you sold day before yesterday at Debreczen. What has become of the rest?"

"Come here, I'll give you an account of it," said the lady, counting on her fingers with the point of the knife. "Two hundred I gave to the furrier—four hundred to the saddler—three hundred to the grocer—three hundred to the tailor:—two hundred I spent in the market: count how much remains."

"None of your arithmetic for me. I only want money, much money! Where is much money?"

"As I said already, at Körmöcz, in the mint."

"Enough of your foolery!" threatened the highwayman. "For if I begin to search, you won't thank me for it."

"Well, search the carriage over; all you find in it is yours."

"I shan't search the coach, but you, too, to your skin."

"What?" cried the woman, in a passion; and at that moment her face, with her knitted eyebrows, became like that of a mythical Fury. "Try it,"—with these words dashing the knife down into the table, which it pierced to the depth of an inch.

The thief began to speak in a less presumptuous tone.

"What else will you give me?"

"What else, indeed?" said the lady, throwing herself defiantly back in her chair. "The devil and his son."

"You have a bracelet on your arm."

"There you are!" said the woman, unclasping the emerald trinket from her arm, and dashing it on the table.

The thief began to look at it critically.

"What is it worth?"

"I received it as a present: you can get a drink of wine for it in the nearest inn you reach."

"And there is a beautiful ring sparkling on your finger."

"Let it sparkle."

"I don't believe it cannot come off."

"It will not come off, for I shall not give it." At this moment the thief suddenly grasped the woman's hand in which she held the knife, seizing it by the wrist, and while she was writhing in desperate struggle against the iron grip, with his other hand thrust the end of his pistol in her mouth.

This awful scene had till now made upon Lorand the impression of the quarrel of a tipsy husband with his obstinate wife, who answers all his provocations with jesting: the lady seemed incapable of being frightened, the thief of frightening. Some unnatural indifference seemed to give the lie to that scene, which youthful imagination would picture so differently. The meeting of a thief with an unprotected lady, at night, in an inn on the plain! It was impossible that they should speak so to one another.

But as the robber seized the lady's hand, and leaning across the table, drew her by sheer force towards him, continually threatening the screaming woman with a pistol, the young man's blood suddenly boiled up within him. He leaped forward from the darkness, unnoticed by the thief, crept toward him and seized the rascal's right hand, in which he held the pistol, while with his other hand he tore the second pistol from the man's belt.

The highwayman, like some infuriated beast, turned upon his assailant, and strove to free his arm from the other's grip.

He felt he had to do with one whose wrist was as firm as his own.

"Student!" he snarled, with lips tightly drawn like a wolf, and gnashing his gleaming white teeth.

"Don't stir," said Lorand, pointing the pistol at his forehead.

The thief saw plainly that the pistol was not cocked: nor could Lorand have cocked it in this short time.

Lorand, as a matter of fact, in his excitement had not thought of it.

So the highwayman suddenly ducked his head and like a wall-breaking, battering ram, dealt such a blow with his head to Lorand, that the latter fell back on to the bench, and while he was forced to let go of the rascal with his left, he was obliged with his armed right hand to defend himself against the coming attack.

Then the robber pointed the barrel of the second pistol at his forehead.

"Now it is my turn to say, 'don't stir,' student."

In that short moment, as Lorand gazed into the barrel of the pistol that was levelled at his forehead, there flashed through his mind this thought:

"Now is the moment for checkmating the curse of fate and avoiding the threatened suicide. He who loses his life in the defence of persecuted and defenceless travellers dies as a man of honor. Let us see this death."

He rose suddenly before the levelled weapon.

"Don't move or you are a dead man," the thief cried again to him.

But Lorand, face to face with the pistol levelled within a foot of his head calmly put his finger to the trigger of the weapon he himself held and drew it back.

At this the thief suddenly sprang back and rushed to the door, so alarmed that at first he attempted to open it the wrong way.

Lorand took careful aim at him.

But as he stretched out his arm, the lady sprang up from the table, crept to him and seized his arm, shrieking:

"Don't kill him, oh, don't!"

Lorand gazed at her in astonishment.

The beautiful woman's face was convulsed in a torture of terror: the staring look in her beautiful eyes benumbed the young man's sinews. As she threw herself upon his bosom and held down his arms, the embrace quite crippled him.

The highwayman, seeing he could escape, after much

fumbling undid the bolt of the door. When he was at last able to open it, his gypsy humor returned to take the place of his fear. He thrust his dishevelled head in at the half-opened door, and remarked in that broken voice which is peculiarly that of the terrified man:

"A plague upon you, you devil's cur of a student: student, inky-fingered student. Had my pistol been loaded, as the other was, which was in your hand, I would have just given you a pass to hell. Just fall into my hands again! I know that. . . ."

Then he suddenly withdrew his head, affording a very humorous illustration to his threat: and like one pursued he ran out into the court. A few moments later a clatter of hoofs was heard—the robber was making his escape. When he reached the road he began to swear godlessly, reproaching and cursing every student, legatus, and hound of a priest, who, instead of praising God at home, prowled about the high-roads, and spoiled a hard working man's business. Even after he was far down the road his loud cursing could still be heard. For weeks that swearing would fill the air in the bog of Lankadomb, where he had made himself at home in the wild creature's unapproachable lair.

To Lorand this was all quite bewildering.

The arrogant, almost jesting, conversation, by the light of that mysterious flame, between a murderous robber and his victim:—the inexplicable riddle that a night-prowling highwayman should have entered a house with an empty pistol, while in his belt was another, loaded:—and then that woman, that incomprehensible figure, who had laughed at a robber to his face, who had threatened him with a knife as he pressed her to his bosom, and who, could she have freed herself, would surely have dealt him such a blow as she had dealt the table:—that she, when her rescuer was going to shoot her assailant, should have torn aside his hand in terror and defended the miscreant with her own body!

What could be the solution of such a riddle?

Meanwhile the lady had again lighted the candles:

again a gentle light was thrown on all things. Lorand gazed at her. In place of her previous green-blue face, which had gazed on him with the wild look of madness, a smiling, good-humored countenance was presented. She asked in a humorous tone:

"Well, so you are a student, what kind of student? Where did you come from?"

"I came with you, sitting beside the coachman."

"Do you wish to come to Lankadomb?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps to Sárköly's? He loves prayers."

"Oh no. But to Mr. Topányi."

"I cannot advise that: he is very rude to such as you. You are accustomed to preach. Don't go there."

"Still I am going there: and if you don't care to let me sit on the box, I shall go on foot, as I have done until to-day."

"Do you know what? What you would get there would not be much. The money, which that man left here, you have by you as it is. Keep it for yourself: I give it to you. Then go back to the college."

"Madame, I am not accustomed to live on presents," said Lorand, proudly refusing the proffered purse.

The woman was astonished. This is a curious legatus, thought she, who does not live by presents.

Her ladyship began to perceive that in this young man's dust-stained features there was something of that which makes distinctions between man. She began to be surprised at this proud and noble gaze.

Perhaps she was reflecting as to what kind of phenomenon it could be, who with unarmed hand had dared to attack an armed robber, in order to free from his clutch a strange woman in whom he had no interest, and then refused to accept the present he had so well deserved.

Lorand saw that he had allowed a breach to open in his heart through which anyone could easily see the secret of his character. He hastened to cover his error.

"I cannot accept a present, your ladyship, because I wish more. I am not a preaching legatus, but an ex-

pelled school-boy. I am in search of a position where I can earn my living by the work of my hands. When I protected your ladyship it occurred to me, 'This lady may have need for some farm steward or bailiff. She may recommend me to her husband.' I shall be a faithful servant, and I have given a proof of my faithfulness, for I have no written testimonials."

"You wish to be Topányi's steward? Do you know what a godless man he is?"

"That is why I am in search of him. I started direct for him. They expelled me from school for my godlessness. We cannot accuse each other of anything."

"You have committed some crime, then, and that is why you avoid the eyes of the world? Confess what you have done. Murdered? Confess. I shall not be afraid of you for it, nor shall I tell any one. I promise that you shall be welcomed, whatever the crime may be. I have said so. Have you committed murder?"

"No."

"Beaten your father or mother?"

"No, madame:—My crime is that I have instigated the youth against their superiors."

"What superiors? Against the magistrate?"

"Even superior to the magistrate."

"Perhaps against the priest. Well, Topányi will be delighted. He is a great fool in this matter."

The woman uttered these words laughingly; then suddenly a dark shadow crossed her face. With wandering glance she stepped up to the young man, and, putting her hand gently on his arm, asked him in a whisper:

"Do you know how to pray?"

Lorand looked at her, aghast.

"To pray from a book—could you teach some one to pray from a book? Would it require a long time?"

Lorand looked with ever-increasing wonder at the questioner.

"Very well—I did not say anything! Come with us. The coachman is already cracking his whip. Will you sit inside with us, or do you prefer to sit outside beside

the coachman in the open? It is better so; I should prefer it myself. Well, let us go."

The servant, who had crawled out from under the bench, had already collected the silver and crockery; her ladyship paid mine host, and they soon took their seats again in the carriage:—and both thought deeply the whole way. The young man, of that woman, who playfully defied a thief, and struggled for a ring; then of that robber, who came with an empty pistol, and again of that woman, who when he spoke of the powers that be, understood nothing but a magistrate, and had inquired whether he knew how to pray from a book;—and who meanwhile wore golden bracelets, ate from silver, was dressed in silk and carried the fire of youth in her eyes. While the woman thought of that young man who could fight like a hero; was ready to work like a day laborer, to throw money away like a noble, to fascinate women like an angel, and to blaspheme the powers that be like a devil!

CHAPTER XIII

WHICH WILL CONVERT THE OTHER?

In the morning the coach rolled into the courtyard of the castle of Lankadomb. *

Topándy was waiting on the terrace, and ran to meet the young lady, helped her out of the coach and kissed her hand very courteously. At Lorand, who descended from his seat beside the coachman, he gazed with questioning wonder.

The lady answered in his place:

"I have brought an expelled student, who desires to be steward on your estate. You must accept him."

Then, trusting to the hurrying servants to bring her travelling rugs and belongings after her, she ascended into the castle, without further waste of words, leaving Lorand alone with Topándy.

Topándy turned to the young fellow with his usual satirical humor.

"Well, fellow, you've got a fine recommendation! An expelled student; that's saying a good deal. You want to be steward, or bailiff, or præfectus here, do you? It's all the same; choose which title you please. Have you a smattering of the trade?"

"I was brought up to a farm life: it is surely no hieroglyphic to me."

"Bravo! So I shall tell you what my steward has to do. Can you plough with a team of four? Can you stack hay, standing on the top of the sheaves? Can you keep order among a dozen reapers? Can you . . . ?"

Lorand was not taken aback by his questions. He merely replied to each one, "yes."

* i. e., Orchard-hill.