

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.

"That's splendid," said Topány. "Many renowned and well-versed gentlemen of business have come to me, to recommend themselves as farm bailiffs, in buckled shoes; but when I asked them if they could heap dung on dung carts, they all ran away. I am pleased my questions about that did not knock you over. Do you know what the 'conventio' * will be?"

"Yes."

"But how much do *you* expect?"

"Until I can make myself useful, nothing; afterwards, as much as is required from one day to the next."

"Well said; but have you no claims to bailiff's lodgings, office, or something else? That shall be left entirely to your own discretion. On my estate, the steward may lodge where he likes—either in the ox-stall, in the cow-shed, or in the buffalo stable. I don't mind; I leave it entirely to your choice."

Topány looked at him with wicked eyes, as he waited for the answer.

Lorand, however, with the most serious countenance, merely answered that his presence would be required most in the ox-stall, so he would take up his quarters there.

"So on that point we are agreed," said Topány, with a loud laugh. "We shall soon see on what terms of friendship we shall stand. I accept the terms; when you are tired of them, don't trouble to say so. There is the gate."

"I shall not turn in that direction."

"Good! I admire your determination. Now come with me; you will receive at once your provisions for five days—take them with you. The shepherd will teach you how to cook and prepare your meals."

Lorand did not make a single grimace at these peculiar conditions attached to the office of steward; he acquiesced in everything, as if he found everything most correct.

* The payment. The honorarium.

"Well, come with me, Sir bailiff!"

So he led him into the castle, without even so much as inquiring his name. He thought that in any case he would disappear in a day or two.

Her ladyship was just in the ante-room, where breakfast was usually served.

While Topány was explaining to Lorand the various quarters from which he might choose a bedroom, her ladyship had got the coffee ready, for déjeuner, and had laid the fine tablecloth on the round table, on which had been placed three cups, and just so many knives, forks and napkins.

As Topány stepped into the room, letting Lorand in after him, her ladyship was engaged in pouring out the coffee from the silver pot into the cups, while the rich buffalo milk boiled away merrily on the glittering white tripod before her. Topány placed himself in the nearest seat, leaving Lorand to stand and wait until her ladyship had time to weigh out his rations for him.

"That is not your place!" exclaimed the fair lady.

Topány sprang up suddenly.

"Pardon. Whose place is this?"

"That gentleman's!" she answered, and nodded at Lorand, both her hands being occupied.

"Please take a seat, sir," said Topány, making room for Lorand.

"You will always sit there," said the lady, putting down the coffee-pot and pointing to the place which had been laid on her left. "At breakfast, at dinner, at supper."

This had a different sound from what the gentleman of the house had said. Rather different from garlic and black bread.

"This will be your room here on the right," continued the lady. "The butler's name is George; he will be your servant. And John is the coachman, who will stand at your orders."

Lorand's wonder only increased. He wished to make some remark, but he did not know himself what he

wanted to say. Topándy, however, burst into a Homeric laugh, in which he quite lost himself.

"Why, brother, didn't you tell me you had already arranged matters with the lady? You would have saved me so much trouble. If matters stand so, sleep on my sofa, and drink from my glass!"

Lorand wished to play the proud beggar. He raised his head defiantly.

"I shall sleep in the hay, and shall drink from——"

"I advise you to do as I tell you," said the lady, making both men wince with the flash of her gaze.

"Surely, brother," continued Topándy, "I can give you no better counsel than that. Well, let us sit down, and drink 'Brotherhood' with a glass of cognac."

Lorand thought it wise to give way before the commanding gaze of the lady, and to accept the proffered place, while the latter laughed outright in sudden good-humor. She was so lovable, so natural, so pleasant, when she laughed like that, Topándy could not forbear from kissing her hands.

The lady laughingly, and with jesting prudery, extended the other hand toward Lorand.

"Well, the other too! Don't be bashful!"

Lorand kissed the other hand.

Upon this, she clapped her hands over her head, and burst into laughter.

"See, see! I have brought you a letter from town," said the lady, drawing out her purse. "It's a good thing the thief left me this, or your letter would have been lost as well."

"Thief?" asked Topándy earnestly. "What thief?"

"Why, at the 'Skull-smasher' inn, where we stopped to water our horses, a thief attacked us, and then wanted to empty our pockets. I threw him my money and my bracelet, but he wanted to tear this ring from my finger, too. That I would not give up. Then he caught hold of my hand, and to prevent my screaming, thrust the butt-end of his pistol into my mouth—the fool!"

The lady related all this with such an air of indifference that Topándy could not make out whether she was joking or not.

"What fable is this?"

"Fable indeed!" was the exclamation that greeted him on two sides, on the one from her ladyship, on the other from the neat little maid, the latter crying out how much she had been frightened; that she was still all of a tremble; the former turned back her sleeve and held out her arm to Topándy.

"See how my arm got scratched by the grasp of the robber! and look here, how bruised my mouth is from the pistol," said she, parting her rosy lips, behind which two rows of pearly teeth glistened. "It's a good thing he didn't knock out my teeth."

"Well, that would have been a pity. But how did you get away from him," asked Topándy, in an anxious tone.

"Well, I don't know whether you would ever have seen me again, if this young man had not dashed to our assistance; for he sprang forward and snatched the pistol from the hand of the robber,—who immediately took to his heels and ran away."

Topándy again shook his head, and said it was hard to believe.

"No doubt he still has the pistol in his pocket."

"Give it to me."

"But don't fool with it; it might go off and hurt somebody."

Lorand handed the pistol in question to Topándy. The barrel was of bronze, highly chased in silver.

"Curious!" exclaimed Topándy, examining the ornamentation. This pistol bears the Sárköly arms."

Without another word he put the weapon in his pocket, and shook hands with Lorand across the table.

"My boy, you are a fine fellow. I honor you for so bravely defending my people. Now I have the more reason in agreeing to your living henceforward under the same roof with me; unless you fear it may,

through fault of mine, fall in upon you. What was the robber like?" he said, turning again to the women.

"We could not see him, because he put out the candle and ran away."

Lorand was struck by the fact that the woman did not seem inclined to recall the robber's features, which she must, however have been able to see by the help of the spirit-lamp; he noticed, too, that she did not utter a word about the robber's being a gypsy.

"I don't know what he was like," she repeated, with a meaning look at Lorand. "Neither of us could see, for it was dark. For the same reason our deliverer could not shoot at him, because it was difficult to aim in the dark. If he had missed him, the robber might have murdered us all."

"A fine adventure," muttered Topánty. "I shall not allow you to travel alone at night another time. I shall go armed myself. I shall not put up with the existence of that den in the marsh any longer or it will always be occupied by such as mean to harm us. As soon as the Tisza overflows, I shall set fire to the reeds about the place, when the stack will catch fire, too."

During this conversation the woman had produced the letter.

"There it is," she cried, handing it to Topánty.

"A lady's handwriting!" exclaimed Topánty, glancing at the direction.

"What, you can tell by the letters whether it is the writing of a man or a woman?" queried the beautiful lady, throwing a curious glance at the writing.

Lorand looked at it, too, and it seemed to him as if he had seen the writing before, but he could not remember where.

It was a strange hand; the characters did not resemble the writing of any of his lady acquaintances, and yet he must have seen it somewhere.

You may cast about and reflect long, Lorand, before you discover whose writing it is. You never thought of her who wrote this letter. You never even noticed her existence! It is the writing of Fanny, of the jolly little

exchange-girl. It was Desi who once showed you that handwriting for a moment, when your mother sent her love in Fanny's letter. Now the unknown hand had written to Topánty to the effect that a young man would appear before him, bespattered and ragged. He was not to ask whence he came, or whither he went; but he was to look well at the noble face, and he would know from it that the youth was not obliged to avoid persecution of the world for some base crime.

Topánty gazed long at the youthful face before him. Could this be the one she meant?

The story of the Parliamentary society of the young men was well known to him.

He asked no questions.

* * * * *

After the first day Lorand felt himself quite at home in Topánty's home.

Topánty treated him as a duke would treat his only son, whom he was training to be his heir; Lorand's conduct toward Topánty was that of a poor man's son, learning to make himself useful in his father's home. Each found many extraordinary traits in the other, and each would have loved to probe to the depths of the other's peculiarities.

Lorand remarked in his uncle a deep, unfathomable feeling underlying his seeming godlessness. Topánty, on his side, suspected that some dark shadow had prematurely crossed the serenity of the young man's mind. Each tried to pierce the depths of the other's soul—but in vain.

Her ladyship had on the first day confided her life secret to Lorand. When he endeavored to pay her the compliment of kissing her hand after supper, she withdrew her hand and refused to accept this mark of respect.

"My dear boy, don't kiss my hand, or 'my ladyship' me any more. I am but a poor gypsy girl. My parents were simple camp-folk; my name is Czippa. I am a domestic servant here, whom the master has dressed

up, out of caprice, in silks and laces, and he makes the servants call me 'madame,' on which account they subsequently mock me,—of course, only behind my back, for if they did it to my face I should strike them; but don't you laugh at me behind my back. I am an orphan gypsy girl, and my master picked me up out of the gutter. He is very kind to me, and I would die for him, if fate so willed. That's how matters stand, do you understand?"

The gypsy girl glanced with dimmed eyes at Topándy, who smilingly listened to her frank confession, as though he approved of it. Then, as if she had gained her master's consent, she turned again to Lorand:

"So call me simply 'Czipra.'"

"All right, Czipra, my sister," said Lorand, holding out his hand.

"Well now, that is nice of you to add that;" upon which she pressed Lorand's hand, and left the men to themselves.

Topándy turned the conversation, and spoke no more to Lorand of Czipra. He first of all wished to find out what impression the discovery would make upon the young man.

The following days enlightened him.

Lorand, from that day, far from showing more familiarity, manifested greater deference towards the reputed lady of the house. Since she had confessed her true position to him, moreover he treated her as one who knew well that the smallest slight would doubly hurt one who was not in a position to complain. He was kind and attentive to the woman, who, beneath the appearance of happiness, was wretched, though innocent. To the uninitiated, she was the lady of the house; to the better informed, she was the favorite of her master, and that was nought but a maiden in the disguise of wife, and Lorand was able to read the riddle aright.

If Topándy watched him, he in his turn observed Topándy; he saw that Topándy did not watch, nor was jealous of the girl. He consented to her traveling alone, confided the greater part of his fortune to her,

overwhelmed her with presents, but beyond this did not trouble about her. Still he showed a certain affection which did not arise from mere habit. He would not brook the least harm to her from anybody, making the whole household fear her as much as the master, and if by chance they hesitated as to their duty to one or the other, it was always Czipra who had a prior claim on their services.

Topándy at once perceived that Lorand did not run after a fair face, nor after the face of any woman, who was not difficult to conquer, because she was not guarded, and who might be easily got rid of, being but a gypsy girl. His heart was either fully occupied by one object only, or it was an infinite void which nothing could fill. Topándy led a boisterous life, when he fell in with his chums, but when alone he was quite another man. To fathom nature's mysteries was a passion with him. In a corner of the basement of the castle there was a chemical laboratory, where he passed his time with making physical experiments; he labored with instruments, he probed the secrets of the stars, and of the earth; at such times he only cared to have Lorand at his side; in him he found a being capable of sharing his scientific researches, though he did not share in his doubts.

"All is matter!" such had for centuries been the motto of the naturalist, and therefore the naturalist had ever found a kindred spirit in the agnostic.

Often did Czipra come upon the two men at their quiet pursuits and watch them for hours together; and though she did not understand what in this higher science went beyond her comprehension, yet she could take pleasure in observing Cartesius' diving imps; she dared to sit upon the insulators, and her joy was boundless when Lorand at such a time, approaching her with his finger, called forth electric sparks from her dress or hands. She found enjoyment, too, in peering through the great telescopes at the heavenly wonders. Lorand was always ready to answer her questions; but the poor girl was far from understanding all. Yet how

rapturous the thought of knowing all! Once when Lorand was explaining to her the properties of the sun-spectrum, the girl sighed and, suddenly bending down to Lorand, whispered blushing:

"Teach me to read."

Lorand looked at her in amazement. Topány, looking over his shoulder, asked her:

"Tell me, what would be the use of teaching you to read?"

The girl clasped her hands to her bosom:

"I should like to learn to pray."

"What? To pray? And what would you pray for?"

Is there anything that you cannot do without?"

"There is."

"What can it be?"

"That is what I should like to know by praying."

"And you do not know yourself what it is?"

"I cannot express what it is."

"And do you know anybody who could give it you?"

The girl pointed to the sky.

Topány shrugged his shoulders at her.

"Bah! you goose, reading is not for girls. Women are best off when they know nothing."

Then he laughed in her face.

Czipra ran weeping out of the laboratory.

Lorand pitied the poor creature, who, dressed in silks and finery, did not know her letters, and who was incapable of raising her voice to God. He was in a mood, through long solitude, for pitying others; under a strange name, known to nobody, separated from the world, he was able to forget the lofty dreams to which a smooth career had pointed, and which fate, at his first steps, had mocked. He had given up the idea that the world should acknowledge this title: "a great patriot, who is the holder of a high office." He who does not desire this should keep to the ploughshare. Ambition should only have well-regulated roads, and success should only begin with a lower office in the state. But he whose hobby it is to murmur, will find a fine career in field labor; and he who wishes to bury himself, will find himself supplied, in life, with a beautiful, ro-

mantic, flowery wheat-covered cemetery by the fields, from the centre of which the happy dead creatures of life cheerfully mock at those who weary themselves and create a disturbance—with the idea that they are doing something, whereas their end is the same as that of the rest of mankind.

Lorand was even beginning to grow indifferent to the awful obligation that lay before him at the end of the appointed time. It was still afar off. Before then a man might die peacefully and quietly; perhaps that other who guarded the secret might pass away ere then. And perhaps the years at the plough would harden the skin of a man's soul, as it did of his face and hands, so that he would come to ridicule a wager, which in his youthful over-enthusiasm he would have fulfilled; a wager the refusal to accept which would merely win the commendation of everybody. And if any one could say the reverse, how could he find him to say it to his face? As regards his family at home, he was fairly at his ease. He often received letters from Dezsö (Desiderius), under another address; they were all well at home, and treated the fate of the expelled son with good grace. He also learned that Madame Bálnokházy had not returned to her husband, but had gone abroad with that actor with whom she had previously been acquainted. This also he had wiped out from his memory. His whole mind was a perfect blank in which there was room for other people's misfortunes.

It was impossible not to remark how Czipra became attached to him in her simplicity. She had a feeling which she had never felt before, a feeling of shame, if some impudent jest was made at her expense by one of Topány's guests, in the presence of Lorand.

Once, when Topány and Lorand were amusing themselves at greater length with optical experiments in the lonely scientific apartment, Lorand took the liberty of introducing the subject.

"Is it true that that girl has grown up without any knowledge whatever?"

"Surely; she knows neither God nor alphabet."