Trilby

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Part The First

"Mimi Pinson est une blonde,
Une blonde que l'on connaît;
Elle n'a qu'une robe au monde,
Landérirette! et qu'un bonnet!"

IT was a fine, sunny, showery day in April.

The big studio window was open at the top, and let in a pleasant breeze from the northwest. Things were beginning to look shipshape at last. The big piano, a semi-grand by Broadwood, had arrived from England by "the Little Quickness" (*la Petite Vitesse*, as the goods trains are called in France), and lay, freshly tuned, alongside the eastern wall; on the wall opposite was a panoply of foils, masks, and boxing-gloves.

A trapeze, a knotted rope, and two parallel cords, supporting each a ring, depended from a huge beam in the ceiling. The walls were of the usual dull red, relieved by plaster casts of arms and legs and hands and feet; and Dante's mask, and Michael Angelo's altorilievo of Leda and the swan, and a centaur and Lapith from the Elgin marbles—on none of these had the dust as yet had time to settle.

There were also studies in oil from the nude; copies of Titian, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Rubens, Tintoret, Leonardo da Vinci—none of the school of Botticelli, Mantegna, and Co.—a firm whose merits had not as yet been revealed to the many.

Along the walls, at a great height, ran a broad shelf, on which were other casts in plaster, terra-cotta, imitation bronze; a little Theseus, a little Venus of Milo, a little discobolus; a little flayed man threatening high heaven (an act that seemed almost pardonable under the circumstances!); a lion and a boar by Barye; an anatomical figure of a horse with only one leg left and no ears; a horse's head from the pediment of the Parthenon, earless also; and the bust of Clytie, with her beautiful low brow, her sweet wan gaze, and the ineffable forward shrug of her dear shoulders that makes her bosom a nest, a rest, a pillow, a refuge—to be loved and desired forever by generation after generation of the sons of men.

Near the stove hung a gridiron, a frying-pan, a toasting-fork, and a pair of bellows. In an adjoining glazed corner cupboard were plates and glasses, black-handled knives, pewter spoons, and three-pronged steel forks; a salad-bowl, vinegar cruets, an oil-flask, two mustard-pots (English and French), and such like things—all scrupulously clean. On the floor, which had been stained and waxed at considerable cost, lay two chetah-skins and a large Persian praying-rug. One-half of it, however (under the trapeze and at the farthest end from the window, beyond the model throne), was covered with coarse matting, that one

might fence or box without slipping down and splitting one's self in two, or fall without breaking any bones.

Two other windows of the usual French size and pattern, with shutters to them and heavy curtains of baize, opened east and west, to let in dawn or sunset, as the case might be, or haply keep them out. And there were alcoves, recesses, irregularities, odd little nooks and corners, to be filled up as time wore on with endless personal knick-knacks, bibelots, private properties and acquisitions—things that make a place genial, homelike, and good to remember, and sweet to muse upon (with fond regret) in after-years.

And an immense divan spread itself in width and length and delightful thickness just beneath the big north window, the business window—a divan so immense that three well-fed, well-contented Englishmen could all lie lazily smoking their pipes on it at once without being in each other's way, and very often did!

At present one of these Englishmen—a Yorkshireman, by-the-way, called Taffy (and also the Man of Blood, because he was supposed to be distantly related to a baronet)—was more energetically engaged. Bare-armed, and in his shirt and trousers, he was twirling a pair of Indian clubs round his head. His face was flushed, and he was perspiring freely and looked fierce. He was a very big young man, fair, with kind but choleric blue eyes, and the muscles of his brawny arm were strong as iron bands.

For three years he had borne her Majesty's commission, and had been through the Crimean campaign without a scratch. He would have been one of the famous six hundred in the famous charge at Balaklava but for a sprained ankle (caught playing leapfrog in the trenches), which kept him in hospital on that momentous day. So that he lost his chance of glory or the grave, and this humiliating misadventure had sickened him of soldiering for life, and he never quite got over it. Then, feeling within himself an irresistible vocation for art, he had sold out; and here he was in Paris, hard at work, as we see.

He was good-looking, with straight features; but I regret to say that, besides his heavy plunger's mustache, he wore an immense pair of drooping auburn whiskers, of the kind that used to be called Piccadilly weepers, and were afterwards affected by Mr. Sothern in Lord Dundreary. It was a fashion to do so then for such of our gilded youth as could afford the time (and the hair); the bigger and fairer the whiskers, the more beautiful was thought the youth! It seems incredible in these

days, when even her Majesty's household brigade go about with smooth cheeks and lips, like priests or play-actors.
"What's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms ...?"

Another inmate of this blissful abode—Sandy, the Laird of Cockpen, as he was called—sat in similarly simple attire at his easel, painting at a lifelike little picture of a Spanish toreador serenading a lady of high degree (in broad daylight). He had never been to Spain, but he had a complete toreador's kit—a bargain which he had picked up for a mere song in the Boulevard du Temple—and he had hired the guitar. His pipe was in his mouth—reversed; for it had gone out, and the ashes were spilled all over his trousers, where holes were often burned in this way. Quite gratuitously, and with a pleasing Scotch accent, he began to declaim:
"A street there is in Paris famous
For which no rhyme our language yields;
Roo Nerve day Petty Shong its name is—
The New Street of the Little Fields...."
And then, in his keen appreciation of the immortal stanza, he chuckled audibly, with a face so blithe and merry and well pleased that it did one good to look at him.
He also had entered life by another door. His parents (good, pious people in Dundee) had intended that he should be a solicitor, as his father and grandfather had been before him. And here he was in Paris famous, painting toreadors, and spouting the "Ballad of the Bouillabaisse," as he would often do out of sheer lightness of heart—much oftener, indeed, than he would say his prayers.
Kneeling on the divan, with his elbow on the window-sill, was a third and much younger youth. The third he was "Little Billee." He had pulled down the green baize blind, and was looking over the roofs and chimney-pots of Paris and all about with all his eyes, munching the while a roll and a savory saveloy, in which there was evidence of much garlic. He ate with great relish, for he was very hungry; he had been all the morning at Carrel's studio, drawing from the life.
Little Billee was small and slender, about twenty or twenty-one, and had a straight white forehead veined with blue, large dark-blue eyes, delicate, regular features, and coal-black hair. He was also very graceful and well built, with very small hands and feet, and much better dressed than his friends, who went out of their way to outdo the denizens of the quartier latin in careless eccentricity of garb, and succeeded. And in his winning and handsome face there was just a faint suggestion of some

possible very remote Jewish ancestor—just a tinge of that strong, sturdy, irrepressible, indomitable, indelible blood which is of such priceless value in diluted homœopathic doses, like the dry white Spanish wine called montijo, which is not meant to be taken pure; but without a judicious admixture of which no sherry can go round the world and keep its flavor intact; or like the famous bull-dog strain, which is not beautiful in itself; and yet just for lacking a little of the same no greyhound can ever hope to be a champion. So, at least, I have been told by wine-merchants and dog-fanciers—the most veracious persons that can be. Fortunately for the world, and especially for ourselves, most of us have in our veins at least a minim of that precious fluid, whether we know it or show it or not. *Tant pis pour les autres!*

As Little Billee munched he also gazed at the busy place below—the Place St. Anatole des Arts—at the old houses opposite, some of which were being pulled down, no doubt lest they should fall of their own sweet will. In the gaps between he would see discolored, old, cracked, dingy walls, with mysterious windows and rusty iron balconies of great antiquity—sights that set him dreaming dreams of mediæval French love and wickedness and crime, bygone mysteries of Paris!

One gap went right through the block, and gave him a glimpse of the river, the "Cité," and the ominous old Morgue; a little to the right rose the gray towers of Notre Dame de Paris into the checkered April sky. Indeed, the top of nearly all Paris laybefore him, with a little stretch of the imagination on his part; and he gazed with a sense of novelty, an interest and a pleasure for which he could not have found any expression in mere language.

Paris! Paris!! Paris!!!

The very name had always been one to conjure with, whether he thought of it as a mere sound on the lips and in the ear, or as a magical written or printed word for the eye. And here was the thing itself at last, and he, he himself, ipsissimus, in the very midst of it, to live there and learn there as long as he liked, and make himself the great artist he longed to be.

Then, his meal finished, he lit a pipe, and flung himself on the divan and sighed deeply, out of the over-full contentment of his heart.

He felt he had never known happiness like this, never even dreamed its possibility. And yet his life had been a happy one. He was young and

tender, was Little Billee; he had never been to any school, and was innocent of the world and its wicked ways; innocent of French especially, and the ways of Paris and its Latin quarter. He had been brought up and educated at home, had spent his boyhood in London with his mother and sister, who now lived in Devonshire on somewhat straitened means. His father, who was dead, had been a clerk in the Treasury.

He and his two friends, Taffy and the Laird, had taken this studio together. The Laird slept there, in a small bedroom off the studio. Taffy had a bedroom at the Hôtel de Seine, in the street of that name. Little Billee lodged at the Hôtel Corneille, in the Place de l'Odéon.

He looked at his two friends, and wondered if any one, living or dead, had ever had such a glorious pair of chums as these.

Whatever they did, whatever they said, was simply perfect in his eyes; they were his guides and philosophers as well as his chums. On the other hand, Taffy and the Laird were as fond of the boy as they could be.

His absolute belief in all they said and did touched them none the less that they were conscious of its being somewhat in excess of their deserts. His almost girlish purity of mind amused and charmed them, and they did all they could to preserve it, even in the quartier latin, where purity is apt to go bad if it be kept too long.

They loved him for his affectionate disposition, his lively and caressing ways; and they admired him far more than he ever knew, for they recognized in him a quickness, a keenness, a delicacy of perception, in matters of form and color, a mysterious facility and felicity of execution, a sense of all that was sweet and beautiful in nature, and a ready power of expressing it, that had not been vouchsafed to them in any such generous profusion, and which, as they ungrudgingly admitted to themselves and each other, amounted to true genius.

And when one within the immediate circle of our intimates is gifted in this abnormal fashion, we either hate or love him for it, in proportion to the greatness of his gift; according to the way we are built.

So Taffy and the Laird loved Little Billee—loved him very much indeed.

Not but what Little Billee had his faults. For instance, he didn't interest himself very warmly in other people's pictures. He didn't seem to care for the Laird's guitar-playing toreador, nor for his serenaded lady—at all events, he never said anything about them, either in praise or blame. He looked at Taffy's realisms (for Taffy was a realist) in silence, and nothing tries true friendship so much as silence of this kind.

But, then, to make up for it, when they all three went to the Louvre, he didn't seem to trouble much about Titian either, or Rembrandt, or Velasquez, Rubens, Veronese, or Leonardo. He looked at the people who looked at the pictures, instead of at the pictures themselves; especially at the people who copied them, the sometimes charming young lady painters—and these seemed to him even more charming than they really were—and he looked a great deal out of the Louvre windows, where there was much to be seen: more Paris, for instance—Paris, of which he could never have enough.

But when, surfeited with classical beauty, they all three went and dined together, and Taffy and the Laird said beautiful things about the old masters, and quarrelled about them, he listened with deference and rapt attention, and reverentially agreed with all they said, and afterwards made the most delightfully funny little pen-and-ink sketches of them, saying all these beautiful things (which he sent to his mother and sister at home); so life-like, so real, that you could almost hear the beautiful things they said; so beautifully drawn that you felt the old masters couldn't have drawn them better themselves; and so irresistibly droll that you felt that the old masters could not have drawn them at all—any more than Milton could have described the quarrel between Sairey Gamp and Betsy Prig; no one, in short, but Little Billee.

Little Billee took up the "Ballad of the Bouillabaisse" where the Laird had left it off, and speculated on the future of himself and his friends, when he should have got to forty years—an almost impossibly remote future.

These speculations were interrupted by a loud knock at the door, and two men came in.

First, a tall, bony individual of any age between thirty and forty-five, of Jewish aspect, well-featured but sinister. He was very shabby and dirty, and wore a red béret and a large velveteen cloak, with a big metal clasp at the collar. His thick, heavy, languid, lustreless black hair fell down behind his ears on to his shoulders, in that musicianlike way that is so offensive to the normal Englishman. He had bold, brilliant black eyes, with long, heavy lids, a thin, sallow face, and a beard of burnt-up black which grew almost from his under eyelids; and over it his mustache, a shade lighter, fell in two long spiral twists. He went by the name of Svengali, and spoke fluent French with a German accent, and humorous German twists and idioms, and his voice was very thin and mean and harsh, and often broke into a disagreeable falsetto.

His companion was a little swarthy young man—a gypsy, possibly—much pitted with the small-pox, and also very shabby. He had large, soft, affectionate brown eyes, like a King Charles spaniel. He had small, nervous, veiny hands, with nails bitten down to the quick, and carried a fiddle and a fiddlestick under his arm, without a case, as though he had been playing in the street.

"Ponchour, mes enfants," said Svengali. "Che vous amène mon ami Checko, qui choue du fiolon gomme un anche!"

Little Billee, who adored all "sweet musicianers," jumped up and made Gecko as warmly welcome as he could in his early French.

"Ha! le biâno!" exclaimed Svengali, flinging his red béret on it, and his cloak on the ground. "Ch'espère qu'il est pon, et pien t'accord!"

And sitting down on the music-stool, he ran up and down the scales with that easy power, that smooth, even crispness of touch, which reveal the master.

Then he fell to playing Chopin's impromptu in A flat, so beautifully that Little Billee's heart went nigh to bursting with suppressed emotion and delight. He had never heard any music of Chopin's before, nothing but British provincial home-made music—melodies with variations, "Annie Laurie," "The Last Rose of Summer," "The Blue Bells of Scotland;" innocent little motherly and sisterly tinklings, invented to set the company at their ease on festive evenings, and make all-round conversation possible for shy people; who fear the unaccompanied sound of their own voices, and whose genial chatter always leaves off directly the music ceases.

He never forgot that impromptu, which he was destined to hear again one day in strange circumstances.

Then Svengali and Gecko made music together, divinely. Little fragmentary things, sometimes consisting but of a few bars, but these bars of *such* beauty and meaning! Scraps, snatches, short melodies, meant to fetch, to charm immediately, or to melt or sadden or madden just for a moment, and that knew just when to leave off—czardas, gypsy dances, Hungarian love-plaints, things little known out of eastern Europe in the fifties of this century, till the Laird and Taffy were almost as wild in their enthusiasm as Little Billee—a silent enthusiasm too deep for speech. And when these two great artists left off to smoke, the three Britishers were too much moved even for that, and there was a stillness....

Suddenly there came a loud knuckle-rapping at the outer door, and a portentous voice of great volume, and that might almost have belonged

to any sex (even an angel's), uttered the British milkman's yodel,"Milk below!" and before any one could say "Entrez," a strange figure appeared, framed by the gloom of the little antechamber.

It was the figure of a very tall and fully developed young female, clad in the gray overcoat of a French infantry soldier, continued netherwards by a short striped petticoat, beneath which were visible her bare white ankles and insteps, and slim, straight, rosy heels, clean cut and smooth as the back of a razor; her toes lost themselves in a huge pair of male list slippers, which made her drag her feet as she walked.

She bore herself with easy, unembarrassed grace, like a person whose nerves and muscles are well in tune, whose spirits are high, who has lived much in the atmosphere of French studios, and feels at home in it. This strange medley of garments was surmounted by a small bare head with short, thick, wavy brown hair, and a very healthy young face, which could scarcely be called quite beautiful at first sight, since the eyes were too wide apart, the mouth too large, the chin too massive, the complexion a mass of freckles. Besides, you can never tell how beautiful (or how ugly) a face may be till you have tried to draw it.

But a small portion of her neck, down by the collar-bone, which just showed itself between the unbuttoned lapels of her military coat collar, was of a delicate privetlike whiteness that is never to be found on any French neck, and very few English ones. Also, she had a very fine brow, broad and low, with thick level eyebrows much darker than her hair, a broad, bony, high bridge to her short nose, and her full, broad cheeks were beautifully modelled. She would have made a singularly handsome boy.

As the creature looked round at the assembled company and flashed her big white teeth at them in an all-embracing smile of uncommon width and quite irresistible sweetness, simplicity, and friendly trust, one saw at a glance that she was out of the common clever, simple, humorous, honest, brave, and kind, and accustomed to be genially welcomed wherever she went. Then suddenly closing the door behind her, dropping her smile, and looking wistful and sweet, with her head on one side and her arms akimbo, "Ye're all English, now, aren't ye?" she exclaimed. "I heard the music, and thought I'd just come in for a bit, and pass the time of day: you don't mind? Trilby, that's my name—Trilby O'Ferrall."

She said this in English, with an accent half Scotch and certain French intonations, and in a voice so rich and deep and full as almost to suggest an incipient tenore robusto; and one felt instinctively that it was a real pity she wasn't a boy, she would have made such a jolly one.

"We're delighted, on the contrary," said Little Billee, and advanced a chair for her.
But she said, "Oh, don't mind me; go on with the music," and sat herself down cross-legged on the model-throne near the piano.
As they still looked at her, curious and half embarrassed, she pulled a paper parcel containing food out of one of the coat-pockets, and exclaimed:
"I'll just take a bite, if you don't object; I'm a model, you know, and it's just rung twelve—'the rest.' I'm posing for Durien the sculptor, on the next floor. I pose to him for the altogether."
"The altogether?" asked Little Billee.
"Yes—*l'ensemble*, you know—head, hands, and feet—everything—especially feet. That's my foot," she said, kicking off her big slipper and stretching out the limb. "It's the handsomest foot in all Paris. There's only one in all Paris to match it, and here it is," and she laughed heartily (like a merry peal of bells), and stuck out the other.
And in truth they were astonishingly beautiful feet, such as one only sees in pictures and statues—a true inspiration of shape and color, all made up of delicate lengths and subtly modulated curves and noble straightnesses and happy little dimpled arrangements in innocent young pink and white.
So that Little Billee, who had the quick, prehensile, æsthetic eye, and knew by the grace of Heaven what the shapes and sizes and colors of almost every bit of man, woman, or child should be (and so seldom are), was quite bewildered to find that a real, bare, live human foot could be such a charming object to look at, and felt that such a base or pedestal lent quite an antique and Olympian dignity to a figure that seemed just then rather grotesque in its mixed attire of military overcoat and female petticoat, and nothing else!
Poor Trilby!
The shape of those lovely slender feet (that were neither large nor small), fac-similed in dusty, pale plaster of Paris, survives on the shelves and walls of many a studio throughout the world, and many a sculptor yet unborn has yet to marvel at their strange perfection, in studious despair.
For when Dame Nature takes it into her head to do her very best, and bestow her minutest attention on a mere detail, as happens now and then—once in a blue moon, perhaps—she makes it uphill work for poor human art to keep pace with her.
It is a wondrous thing, the human foot—like the human hand; even more so, perhaps; but, unlike the hand, with which we are so familiar, it is

seldom a thing of beauty in civilized adults who go about in leather boots or shoes.
So that it is hidden away in disgrace, a thing to be thrust out of sight and forgotten. It can sometimes be very ugly, indeed—the ugliest thing there is, even in the fairest and highest and most gifted of her sex; and then it is of an ugliness to chill and kill romance, and scatter young love's dream, and almost break the heart.
And all for the sake of a high heel and a ridiculously pointed toe—mean things, at the best!
Conversely, when Mother Nature has taken extra pains in the building of it, and proper care or happy chance has kept it free of lamentable deformations, indurations, and discolorations—all those grewsome boot-begotten abominations which have made it so generally unpopular—the sudden sight of it, uncovered, comes as a very rare and singularly pleasing surprise to the eye that has learned how to see!
Nothing else that Mother Nature has to show, not even the human face divine, has more subtle power to suggest high physical distinction, happy evolution, and supreme development; the lordship of man over beast, the lordship of man over man, the lordship of woman over all!
En, voilà, de l'éloquence—à propos de bottes!
Trilby had respected Mother Nature's special gift to herself—had never worn a leather boot or shoe, had always taken as much care of her feet as many a fine lady takes of her hands. It was her one coquetry, the only real vanity she had.
Gecko, his fiddle in one hand and his bow in the other, stared at her in open-mouthed admiration and delight, as she ate her sandwich of soldier's bread and *fromage à la crème* quite unconcerned.
When she had finished she licked the tips of her fingers clean of cheese, and produced a small tobacco-pouch from another military pocket, and made herself a cigarette, and lit it and smoked it, inhaling the smoke in large whiffs, filling her lungs with it, and sending it back through her nostrils, with a look of great beatitude.
Svengali played Schubert's "Rosemonde," and flashed a pair of languishing black eyes at her with intent to kill.
But she didn't even look his way. She looked at Little Billee, at big Taffy, at the Laird, at the casts and studies, at the sky, the chimney-pots over the way, the towers of Notre Dame, just visible from where she sat.
Only when he finished she exclaimed: "Maïe, aïe! c'est rudement bien tapé, c'te musique-là! Seulement, c'est pas gai, vous savez! Comment q'ça s'appelle?"
"It is called the 'Rosemonde' of Schubert, matemoiselle," replied Svengali. (I will translate.)
"And what's that—Rosemonde?" said she.

"Rosemonde was a princess of Cyprus, matemoiselle, and Cyprus is an island."
"Ah, and Schubert, then—where's that?"
"Schubert is not an island, matemoiselle. Schubert was a compatriot of mine, and made music, and played the piano, just like me."
"Ah, Schubert was a *monsieur*, then. Don't know him; never heard his name."
"That is a pity, matemoiselle. He had some talent. You like this better, perhaps," and he strummed,
"Messieurs les étudiants,
S'en vont à la chaumière
Pour y danser le cancan,"
striking wrong notes, and banging out a bass in a different key—a hideously grotesque performance.
"Yes, I like that better. It's gayer, you know. Is that also composed by a compatriot of yours?" asked the lady.
"Heaven forbid, matemoiselle."
And the laugh was against Svengali.
But the real fun of it all (if there was any) lay in the fact that she was perfectly sincere.
"Are you fond of music?" asked Little Billee.
"Oh, ain't I, just!" she replied. "My father sang like a bird. He was a gentleman and a scholar, my father was. His name was Patrick Michael O'Ferrall, fellow of Trinity, Cambridge. He used to sing 'Ben Bolt.' Do you know 'Ben Bolt'?"
"Oh yes, I know it well," said Little Billee. "It's a very pretty song."
"I can sing it," said Miss O'Ferrall. "Shall I?"
"Oh, certainly, if you will be so kind."
Miss O'Ferrall threw away the end of her cigarette, put her hands on her knees as she sat cross-legged on the model-throne, and sticking her elbows well out, she looked up to the ceiling with a tender, sentimental smile, and sang the touching song,
"Oh, don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?
Sweet Alice, with hair so brown?" etc., etc.
As some things are too sad and too deep for tears, so some things are too grotesque and too funny for laughter. Of such a kind was Miss O'Ferrall's performance of "Ben Bolt."
From that capacious mouth and through that high-bridged bony nose there rolled a volume of breathy sound, not loud, but so immense that it seemed to come from all round, to be reverberated from every surface in the studio. She followed more or less the shape of the tune, going up when it rose and down when it fell, but with such immense intervals between the notes as were never dreamed of in any mortal melody. It was as though she could never once have deviated into tune, never once have hit upon a true note, even by a fluke—in fact, as though she were

absolutely tone-deaf and without ear, although she stuck to the time correctly enough.
She finished her song amid an embarrassing silence. The audience didn't quite know whether it were meant for fun or seriously. One wondered if she were not paying out Svengali for his impertinent performance of "Messieurs les étudiants." If so, it was a capital piece of impromptu tit-for-tat admirably acted, and a very ugly gleam yellowed the tawny black of Svengali's big eyes. He was so fond of making fun of others that he particularly resented being made fun of himself—couldn't endure that any one should ever have the laugh of *him*.
At length Little Billee said: "Thank you so much. It is a capital song."
"Yes," said Miss O'Ferrall. "It's the only song I know, unfortunately. My father used to sing it, just like that, when he felt jolly after hot rum and water. It used to make people cry; he used to cry over it himself. *I* never do. Some people think I can't sing a bit. All I can say is that I've often had to sing it six or seven times running in *lots* of studios. I vary it, you know—not the words, but the tune. You must remember that I've only taken to it lately. Do you know Litolff? Well, he's a great composer, and he came to Durien's the other day, and I sang 'Ben Bolt,' and what do you think he said? Why, he said Madame Alboni couldn't go nearly so high or so low as I did, and that her voice wasn't half so strong. He gave me his word of honor. He said I breathed as natural and straight as a baby, and all I want is to get my voice a little more under control. That's what *he* said."
"Qu'est-ce qu'elle dit?" asked Svengali. And she said it all over again to him in French—quite French French—of the most colloquial kind. Her accent was not that of the Comédie Française, nor yet that of the Faubourg St. Germain, nor yet that of the pavement. It was quaint and expressive—"funny without being vulgar."
"Barpleu! he was right, Litolff," said Svengali. "I assure you, matemoiselle, that I have never heard a voice that can equal yours; you have a talent quite exceptional."
She blushed with pleasure, and the others thought him a "beastly cad" for poking fun at the poor girl in such a way. And they thought Monsieur Litolff another.
She then got up and shook the crumbs off her coat, and slipped her feet into Durien's slippers, saying, in English: "Well, I've got to go back. Life ain't all beer and skittles, and more's the pity; but what's the odds, so long as you're happy?"

On her way out she stopped before Taffy's picture—a chiffonnier with his lantern bending over a dust heap. For Taffy was, or thought himself, a passionate realist in those days. He has changed, and now paints nothing but King Arthurs and Guineveres and Lancelots and Elaines and floating Ladies of Shalott.

"That chiffonnier's basket isn't hitched high enough," she remarked. "How could he tap his pick against the rim and make the rag fall into it if it's hitched only half-way up his back? And he's got the wrong sabots, and the wrong lantern; it's *all* wrong."

"Dear me!" said Taffy, turning very red; "you seem to know a lot about it. It's a pity you don't paint, yourself."

"Ah! now you're cross!" said Miss O'Ferrall. "Oh, maïe, aïe!"

She went to the door and paused, looking round benignly. "What nice teeth you've all three got. That's because you're Englishmen, I suppose, and clean them twice a day. I do too. Trilby O'Ferrall, that's my name, 48 Rue des Pousse-Cailloux!—pose pour l'ensemble, quand ça l'amuse! va-t-en ville, et fait tout ce qui concerne son état! Don't forget. Thanks all, and good-bye."

"En v'là une orichinale," said Svengali.

"I think she's lovely," said Little Billee, the young and tender. "Oh, heavens, what angel's feet! It makes me sick to think she sits for the figure. I'm sure she's quite a lady."

And in five minutes or so, with the point of an old compass, he scratched in white on the dark red wall a three-quarter profile outline of Trilby's left foot, which was perhaps the more perfect poem of the two.

Slight as it was, this little piece of impromptu etching, in its sense of beauty, in its quick seizing of a peculiar individuality, its subtle rendering of a strongly received impression, was already the work of a master. It was Trilby's foot, and nobody else's, nor could have been, and nobody else but Little Billee could have drawn it in just that inspired way.

"Qu'est-ce que c'est, 'Ben Bolt'?" inquired Gecko.

Upon which Little Billee was made by Taffy to sit down to the piano and sing it. He sang it very nicely with his pleasant little throaty English barytone.

It was solely in order that Little Billee should have opportunities of practising this graceful accomplishment of his, for his own and his friends' delectation, that the piano had been sent over from London, at great cost to Taffy and the Laird. It had belonged to Taffy's mother, who was dead.

Before he had finished the second verse, Svengali exclaimed: "Mais c'est tout-à-fait chentil! Allons, Gecko, chouez-nous ça!"
And he put his big hands on the piano, over Little Billee's, pushed him off the music-stool with his great gaunt body, and, sitting on it himself, he played a masterly prelude. It was impressive to hear the complicated richness and volume of the sounds he evoked after Little Billee's gentle "tink-a-tink."
And Gecko, cuddling lovingly his violin and closing his upturned eyes, played that simple melody as it had probably never been played before—such passion, such pathos, such a tone!—and they turned it and twisted it, and went from one key to another, playing into each other's hands, Svengali taking the lead; and fugued and canoned and counterpointed and battle-doored and shuttlecocked it, high and low, soft and loud, in minor, in pizzicato, and in sordino—adagio, andante, allegretto, scherzo—and exhausted all its possibilities of beauty; till their susceptible audience of three was all but crazed with delight and wonder; and the masterful Ben Bolt, and his over-tender Alice, and his too submissive friend, and his old schoolmaster so kind and so true, and his long-dead schoolmates, and the rustic porch and the mill, and the slab of granite so gray,

"And the dear little nook
By the clear running brook,"

were all magnified into a strange, almost holy poetic dignity and splendor quite undreamed of by whoever wrote the words and music of that unsophisticated little song, which has touched so many simple British hearts that don't know any better—and among them, once, that of the present scribe—long, long ago!
"Sacrepleu! il choue pien, le Checko, hein?" said Svengali, when they had brought this wonderful double improvisation to a climax and a close. "C'est mon élèfe! che le fais chanter sur son fiolon, c'est comme si c'était *moi* qui chantais! ach! si ch'afais pour teux sous de voix, che serais le bremier chanteur du monte! I cannot sing!" he continued. (I will translate him into English, without attempting to translate his accent, which is a mere matter of judiciously transposing p's and b's, and t's and d's, and f's and v's, and g's and k's, and turning the soft French j into sch, and a pretty language into an ugly one.)
"I cannot sing myself, I cannot play the violin, but I can teach—hein, Gecko? And I have a pupil—hein, Gecko?—la betite Honorine;" and here he leered all round with a leer that was not engaging. "The world shall hear of la betite Honorine some day—hein, Gecko? Listen all—this is how I teach la betite Honorine! Gecko, play me a little accompaniment in pizzicato."
And he pulled out of his pocket a kind of little flexible flageolet (of his own invention, it seems), which he screwed together and put to his lips, and on this humble instrument he played "Ben Bolt," while Gecko

accompanied him, using his fiddle as a guitar, his adoring eyes fixed in reverence on his master.

And it would be impossible to render in any words the deftness, the distinction, the grace, power, pathos, and passion with which this truly phenomenal artist executed the poor old twopenny tune on his elastic penny whistle—for it was little more—such thrilling, vibrating, piercing tenderness, now loud and full, a shrill scream of anguish, now soft as a whisper, a mere melodic breath, more human almost than the human voice itself, a perfection unattainable even by Gecko, a master, on an instrument which is the acknowledged king of all!

So that the tear which had been so close to the brink of Little Billee's eye while Gecko was playing now rose and trembled under his eyelid and spilled itself down his nose; and he had to dissemble and surreptitiously mop it up with his little finger as he leaned his chin on his hand, and cough a little husky, unnatural cough—*pour se donner une contenance*!

He had never heard such music as this, never dreamed such music was possible. He was conscious, while it lasted, that he saw deeper into the beauty, the sadness of things, the very heart of them, and their pathetic evanescence, as with a new, inner eye—even into eternity itself, beyond the veil—a vague cosmic vision that faded when the music was over, but left an unfading reminiscence of its having been, and a passionate desire to express the like some day through the plastic medium of his own beautiful art.

When Svengali ended, he leered again on his dumb-struck audience, and said: "That is how I teach la betite Honorine to sing; that is how I teach Gecko to play; that is how I teach '*il bel canto*'! It was lost, the bel canto—but I found it, in a dream—I, and nobody else—I—Svengali—I—I—*I!* But that is enough of music; let us play at something else—let us play at this!" he cried, jumping up and seizing a foil and bending it against the wall.... "Come along, Little Pillee, and I will show you something more you don't know...."

So Little Billee took off coat and waistcoat, donned mask and glove and fencing-shoes, and they had an "assault of arms," as it is nobly called in French, and in which poor Little Billee came off very badly. The German Pole fenced wildly, but well.

Then it was the Laird's turn, and he came off badly too; so then Taffy took up the foil, and redeemed the honor of Great Britain, as became a British hussar and a Man of Blood. For Taffy, by long and assiduous practice in the best school in Paris (and also by virtue of his native aptitudes), was a match for any maître d'armes in the whole French army, and Svengali got "what for."

And when it was time to give up play and settle down to work, others dropped in—French, English, Swiss, German, American, Greek; curtains were drawn and shutters opened; the studio was flooded with light—and

the afternoon was healthily spent in athletic and gymnastic exercises till dinner-time.

But Little Billee, who had had enough of fencing and gymnastics for the day, amused himself by filling up with black and white and red chalk-strokes the outline of Trilby's foot on the wall, lest he should forget his fresh vision of it, which was still to him as the thing itself—an absolute reality, born of a mere glance, a mere chance.

Durien came in and looked over his shoulder, and exclaimed: "Tiens! le pied de Trilby! vous avez fait ça d'après nature?"

"Nong!"

"De mémoire, alors?"

"Wee!"

"Je vous en fais mon compliment! Vous avez eu la main heureuse. Je voudrais bien avoir fait ça, moi! C'est un petit chef-d'œuvre que vous avez fait là—tout bonnement, mon cher! Mais vous élaborez trop. De grâce, n'y touchez plus!"

And Little Billee was pleased, and touched it no more; for Durien was a great sculptor, and sincerity itself.

And then—well, I happen to forget what sort of day this particular day turned into at about six of the clock.

If it was decently fine, the most of them went off to dine at the Restaurant de la Couronne, kept by the Père Trin, in the Rue de Monsieur, who gave you of his best to eat and drink for twenty sols Parisis, or one franc in the coin of the empire. Good distending soups, omelets that were only too savory, lentils, red and white beans, meat so dressed and sauced and seasoned that you didn't know whether it were beef or mutton—flesh, fowl, or good red herring—or even bad, for that matter—nor very greatly care.

And just the same lettuce, radishes, and cheese of Gruyère or Brie as you got at the Trois Frères Provençaux (but not the same butter!). And to wash it all down, generous wine in wooden "brocs"—that stained a lovely æsthetic blue everything it was spilled over.

And you hobnobbed with models, male and female, students of law and medicine, painters and sculptors, workmen and blanchisseuses and grisettes, and found them very good company, and most improving to your French, if your French was of the usual British kind, and even to some of your manners, if these were very British indeed. And the evening was innocently wound up with billiards, cards, or dominos at the Café du Luxembourg opposite; or at the Théâtre du Luxembourg, in the Rue de Madame, to see funny farces with screamingly droll Englishmen in them; or, still better, at the Jardin Bullier (la Closerie des

Lilas), to see the students dance the cancan, or try and dance it yourself, which is not so easy as it seems; or, best of all, at the Théâtre de l'Odéon, to see some piece of classical *repertoire*.

Or, if it were not only fine, but a Saturday afternoon into the bargain, the Laird would put on a necktie and a few other necessary things, and the three friends would walk arm in arm to Taffy's hotel in the Rue de Seine, and wait outside till he had made himself as presentable as the Laird, which did not take very long. And then (Little Billee was always presentable) they would, arm in arm, the huge Taffy in the middle, descend the Rue de Seine and cross a bridge to the Cité, and have a look in at the Morgue. Then back again to the quays on the rive gauche by the Pont Neuf, to wend their way westward; now on one side to look at the print and picture shops and the magasins of bric-à-brac, and haply sometimes buy thereof, now on the other to finger and cheapen the second-hand books for sale on the parapet, and even pick up one or two utterly unwanted bargains, never to be read or opened again.

When they reached the Pont des Arts they would cross it, stopping in the middle to look up the river towards the old Cité and Notre Dame, eastward, and dream unutterable things, and try to utter them. Then, turning westward, they would gaze at the glowing sky and all it glowed upon—the corner of the Tuileries and the Louvre, the many bridges, the Chamber of Deputies, the golden river narrowing its perspective and broadening its bed as it went flowing and winding on its way between Passy and Grenelle to St. Cloud, to Rouen, to the Havre, to England perhaps—where *they* didn't want to be just then; and they would try and express themselves to the effect that life was uncommonly well worth living in that particular city at that particular time of the day and year and century, at that particular epoch of their own mortal and uncertain lives.

Then, still arm in arm and chatting gayly, across the court-yard of the Louvre, through gilded gates well guarded by reckless imperial Zouaves, up the arcaded Rue de Rivoli as far as the Rue Castiglione, where they would stare with greedy eyes at the window of the great corner pastry-cook, and marvel at the beautiful assortment of bonbons, pralines, dragées, marrons glacés—saccharine, crystalline substances of all kinds and colors, as charming to look at as an illumination; precious stones, delicately frosted sweets, pearls and diamonds so arranged as to melt in the mouth; especially, at this particular time of the year, the monstrous Easter-eggs of enchanting hue, enshrined like costly jewels in caskets of satin and gold; and the Laird, who was well read in his English classics and liked to show it, would opine that "they managed these things better in France."

Then across the street by a great gate into the Allée des Feuillants, and up to the Place de la Concorde—to gaze, but quite without base envy, at the smart people coming back from the Bois de Boulogne. For even in Paris "carriage people" have a way of looking bored, of taking their pleasure sadly, of having nothing to say to each other, as though the vibration of so many wheels all rolling home the same way every afternoon had hypnotized them into silence, idiocy, and melancholia.

And our three musketeers of the brush would speculate on the vanity of wealth and rank and fashion; on the satiety that follows in the wake of self-indulgence and overtakes it; on the weariness of the pleasures that become a toil—as if they knew all about it, had found it all out for themselves, and nobody else had ever found it out before!

Then they found out something else—namely, that the sting of healthy appetite was becoming intolerable; so they would betake themselves to an English eating-house in the Rue de la Madeleine (on the left-hand side near the top), where they would renovate their strength and their patriotism on British beef and beer, and household bread, and bracing, biting, stinging yellow mustard, and horseradish, and noble apple-pie, and Cheshire cheese; and get through as much of these in an hour or so as they could for talking, talking, talking; such happy talk! as full of sanguine hope and enthusiasm, of cocksure commendation or condemnation of all painters, dead or alive, of modest but firm belief in themselves and each other, as a Paris Easter-egg is full of sweets and pleasantness (for the young).

And then a stroll on the crowded, well-lighted boulevards, and a bock at the café there, at a little three-legged marble table right out on the genial asphalt pavement, still talking nineteen to the dozen.

Then home by dark, old, silent streets and some deserted bridge to their beloved Latin quarter, the Morgue gleaming cold and still and fatal in the pale lamplight, and Notre Dame pricking up its watchful twin towers, which have looked down for so many centuries on so many happy, sanguine, expansive youths walking arm in arm by twos and threes, and forever talking, talking, talking....

The Laird and Little Billee would see Taffy safe to the door of his hôtel garni in the Rue de Seine, where they would find much to say to each other before they said good-night—so much that Taffy and Little Billee would see the Laird safe to *his* door, in the Place St. Anatole des Arts. And then a discussion would arise between Taffy and the Laird on the immortality of the soul, let us say, or the exact meaning of the word "gentleman," or the relative merits of Dickens and Thackeray, or some such recondite and quite unhackneyed theme, and Taffy and the Laird

would escort Little Billee to *his* door, in the Place de l'Odéon, and he would re-escort them both back again, and so on till any hour you please.

Or again, if it rained, and Paris through the studio window loomed lead-colored, with its shiny slate roofs under skies that were ashen and sober, and the wild west wind made woful music among the chimney-pots, and little gray waves ran up the river the wrong way, and the Morgue looked chill and dark and wet, and almost uninviting (even to three healthy-minded young Britons), they would resolve to dine and spend a happy evening at home.

Little Billee, taking with him three francs (or even four), would dive into back streets and buy a yard or so of crusty new bread, well burned on the flat side, a fillet of beef, a litre of wine, potatoes and onions, butter, a little cylindrical cheese called "bondon de Neufchâtel," tender curly lettuce, with chervil, parsley, spring onions, and other fine herbs, and a pod of garlic, which would be rubbed on a crust of bread to flavor things with.

Taffy would lay the cloth Englishwise, and also make the salad, for which, like everybody else I ever met, he had a special receipt of his own (putting in the oil first and the vinegar after); and indeed his salads were quite as good as everybody else's.

The Laird, bending over the stove, would cook the onions and beef into a savory Scotch mess so cunningly that you could not taste the beef for the onions—nor always the onions for the garlic!

And they would dine far better than at le Père Trin's, far better than at the English Restaurant in the Rue de la Madeleine—better than anywhere else on earth!

And after dinner, what coffee, roasted and ground on the spot, what pipes and cigarettes of "caporal," by the light of the three shaded lamps, while the rain beat against the big north window, and the wind went howling round the quaint old mediæval tower at the corner of the Rue Vieille des Mauvais Ladres (the old street of the bad lepers), and the damp logs hissed and crackled in the stove!

What jolly talk into the small hours! Thackeray and Dickens again, and Tennyson and Byron (who was "not dead yet" in those days); and Titian and Velasquez, and young Millais and Holman Hunt (just out); and Monsieur Ingres and Monsieur Delacroix, and Balzac and Stendhal and

George Sand; and the good Dumas! and Edgar Allan Poe; and the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome....

Good, honest, innocent, artless prattle—not of the wisest, perhaps, nor redolent of the very highest culture (which, by-the-way, can mar as well as make), nor leading to any very practical result; but quite pathetically sweet from the sincerity and fervor of its convictions, a profound belief in their importance, and a proud trust in their life-long immutability. Oh, happy days and happy nights, sacred to art and friendship! oh, happy times of careless impecuniosity, and youth and hope and health and strength and freedom—with all Paris for a playground, and its dear old unregenerate Latin quarter for a workshop and a home!

And, up to then, no kill-joy complications of love!

No, decidedly no! Little Billee had never known such happiness as this—never even dreamed of its possibility.

A day or two after this, our opening day, but in the afternoon, when the fencing and boxing had begun and the trapeze was in full swing, Trilby's "Milk below!" was sounded at the door, and she appeared—clothed this time in her right mind, as it seemed: a tall, straight, flat-backed, square-shouldered, deep-chested, full-bosomed young grisette, in a snowy frilled cap, a neat black gown and white apron, pretty faded, well-darned, brown stockings, and well-worn, soft, gray, square-toed slippers of list, without heels and originally shapeless; but which her feet, uncompromising and inexorable as boot-trees, had ennobled into everlasting classic shapeliness, and stamped with an unforgettable individuality, as does a beautiful hand its well-worn glove—a fact Little Billee was not slow to perceive, with a curious conscious thrill that was only half æsthetic.

Then he looked into her freckled face, and met the kind and tender mirthfulness of her gaze and the plucky frankness of her fine wide smile with a thrill that was not æsthetic at all (nor the reverse), but all of the heart. And in one of his quick flashes of intuitive insight he divined far down beneath the shining surface of those eyes (which seemed for a moment to reflect only a little image of himself against the sky beyond the big north window) a well of sweetness; and floating somewhere in the midst of it the very heart of compassion, generosity, and warm sisterly love; and under that—alas! at the bottom of all—a thin slimy layer of sorrow and shame. And just as long as it takes for a tear to rise and gather and choke itself back again, this sudden revelation shook his nervous little frame with a pang of pity, and the knightly wish to help.