



THE DYNAMITER'S SWEETHEART.

BY GRANT ALLEN.

THE only thing known about her with certainty," said the papers next morning, "is that the wretched woman was an associate of the man Laminski, who is believed to have been the real author of this atrocious outrage. She lodged in the same house with him in the Boulevard St. Michel; she worked at the same studio; the relations between them are described as most cordial; and it is even said that she was engaged to be married to him. By this fortunate disaster society is well rid"—but, there, you know the way the papers talk about these things, and how very little reason there is, as a rule, in all they say of them.

Let me tell you the true story of that sweet little American woman.

She was small and slight: one of those dainty, delicate, *mignon* New England girls, with shell-like ears and transparent complexions, who look as if they were made of the finest porcelain, yet spring, Heaven knows how, out of rough upland farm-houses. It was in her native Vermont that the hunger of art first came upon Essie Lothrop. You must know America to know just how it came, seizing her by the throat, as it were, one day, among the cows and the apple-harvest, at sight of some early Italian pictures engraved in a magazine. From her childhood upward, to be sure, Essie had drawn pictures for her own delight with a plain lead

pencil; drawn the ducks, and the lambs, and the wild orange-lilies that ran riot in the woods; drawn them instinctively, without teaching of any sort, for pure, pure love of them. But these early Italian pictures, then seen for the first time, crossing her simple horizon on the hills of Vermont, roused a fresh fierce thrill in that eager little breast of hers. She had heard of art, from a distance, as a thing glorious and beautiful, which sprang far from New England. Now those four or five wood-cuts in the magazine suggested to her mind unknown possibilities of artistic beauty. She said to herself at once, "I must know these things. I must see them with my eyes. I must live my life among them."

From that day forth it became a fixed idea with Essie Lothrop that she should go to Paris and study painting. Where Paris was, what Paris could do for her, she only guessed from the meagre details in her common-school geography. But with American intuition she was somehow dimly aware that if you wanted an artistic education, Paris was the one right place to go for it.

"Paris!" her father cried, when she spoke of it first to him, in the field behind the barn; "why, Essie, do tell! That's whar folks are allus gettin' up revolootions, ain't it? An' I guess them furriners is most all Papishes."

"But it's the place to study art, father," Essie cried, with her big eyes wide open.



"I MUST KNOW THESE THINGS."

"And I mean to study art, if I have to die for it."

She didn't know how prophetic a word she had spoken.

Thenceforth, however, life meant but one thing to Essie Lothrop. She lived in order to work for the money which would take her to study art in Paris. She was sixteen when that revelation came upon her: she was twenty when she found herself, alone and a stranger, in the streets of the wicked, unheeding city.

Not that she thought it wicked. Essie was too innocent to have any fears in committing herself to the unknown world of Paris. With true American guilelessness, she considered it perfectly natural that a girl of twenty should hire a room for herself, *au cinquième*, in the Boulevard St. Michel, and should present herself as a student at Valentin's studio.

She had learned a little French beforehand in her remote New England home; learned it direct from a book, with just a hint or two as to pronunciation from an older and wiser companion; but she had so much of that strange natural tact which Heaven has been pleased to bestow on New England girls,

that she spoke tolerably well even at the very first outset, and quickly picked up a fair Parisian accent in the course of a week or two. Sometimes these frail and transparent-looking Yankee girls have mind enough to do anything they choose to undertake, and certainly Essie Lothrop spoke French at the end of three months with a fluency and purity that would have made most Englishmen stare with astonishment.

There was joy at Valentin's the first morning when Essie made her appearance. Slight, smiling, demure, with her American ease and her American frankness, she took the fancy of all the men students at once.

"She is good," they said, "the little one!"

When she dropped her brush, it was Stanislas Laminski who picked it up and handed it back to her. She accepted it with a smile, the perfectly courteous and good-humoured smile of the girl who had come fresh from her Vermont fields to that great teeming Paris, who knew no middle term between her native village and the Boulevard St. Michel. She thought no evil. To her, these men were just fellow-students, as the Vermont boys had been in the common-school of her township. She took their obtrusive politeness as her natural due, never dreaming Jean and Alphonse could mean anything more by it than Joe and Pete would have meant in her upland hamlet.

"Is she droll, the little one?" the men students said at first, when she gravely allowed them to carry her things back for her to her room *au cinquième*, and even invited them in with smiling grace to share her cup of tea—those noisy youths, who lived upon nothing but cigarettes and absinthe. They looked at one another shamefacedly, and stifled their smiles; then they answered: "Merci, mademoiselle, we do not drink tea. But we thank you from the heart for your amiable hospitality."

They bowed and withdrew, Laminski last of all, with a side glance over his shoulder. Then, when they reached the bottom of the five flights of stairs, they burst out laughing simultaneously. But it was a deprecatory laugh. "Is she innocent, the American? She asked us to tea! Hein, Jules, my boy! hein, Alphonse! that was a rich one, wasn't it?"

But Laminski lingered behind, and looked up at her window.

As for Essie, she sat down, not one atom abashed, to think over her first day's adventures in the studio. An English girl under the circumstances would have been terribly oppressed by a vague sense of loneliness. But Essie was not. It is the genius of her countrywomen. She sat down and smiled to herself at her day's work, contentedly. What nice, friendly young men they had all been, to be sure, and how polite they had seemed to her! And Valentin himself had looked approvingly at her first essay, and had muttered to himself, "She will do, the little one." How delicious to be really in Paris, where men and women learn art, and to feel yourself in touch with all those great masters in the Louvre and the Luxembourg!

Essie was quite at home at once, as she brewed her tea, and drank it by herself in her room *au cinquième*. Only, she was half sorry to be quite alone that first afternoon; what a pity those good-looking, nice-mannered young men hadn't really dropped in to share a friendly cup with her!

Next morning she was back at the studio early, neat and demure as ever, her golden hair wound up in the most artistic coil with charming freedom, and her sweet child's face beaming innocent welcome to the men as they entered. The girls looked more coldly at her, and gave her a stiff bow; but only that second day. Before a week was out they understood "the American," and vaguely felt that though her code of proprieties was quite other than their own — she came without a chaperon — yet she was entirely *comme il faut*, and a dear little thing into the bargain also. They never interfered with her; they let her come and go, recognising the fact that, after all, Americans were Americans, and "que voulez-vous, ma chère? C'est comme ça là-bas, allez!"

Valentin approved of her.

"That child will go far," he said sometimes, confidentially, to Stanislas Laminski.

"She has talent, do you see? Talent! bah, she has genius. She has learnt nothing, of course; but she will learn; she is plastic. There's more originality in that child's little finger than in all that fat Kérouac's Breton body. Ah, yes, she will go far, if you others leave her alone. She is innocent, the little one; respect her innocence."

Laminski sat next her and painted by her side. He did his best to help her. Often he pointed out to her when things she did were technically wrong; set her right in her drawing, corrected her first crude ideas of colour. Essie, living for art, put her head on one side and drank it all in eagerly. She was docile like a child; she saw these men knew more about it than she did, and she was anxious to profit as far as possible by their instruction. Laminski liked her;



"HE DID HIS BEST TO HELP HER."

she was so small and so pretty. Like a dainty little flower, Laminski thought to himself. With an artist's eye, with a poet's heart, how could he help admiring her?

One afternoon he walked home with her, and carried her things for her. At the top of the stairs, she turned and took them from him,

smiling. "Will you come in and rest awhile, monsieur?" she asked, with her innocent frankness. Laminski hesitated. The others were not by. After all, what harm? Why not accept that innocent invitation in the spirit in which she gave it?

He stammered out a vague acquiescence. Essie flung open the door and preceded him into the room. It was a bedroom of the common Parisian Jack-of-all-trades sort, with the bed huddled away into a niche in the background, and the rest of the apartment furnished like a *salon*. Essie waved him to the sofa. He seated himself on it, gingerly, very close to the edge, as if half afraid of making himself too comfortable. Essie noticed it and laughed. "But why so?" she asked, merrily. Then her eye fell on an envelope on the table close by. "Ah! a letter from Dicky!" she cried, and took it up and opened it.

"And who is Dicky?" Laminski asked, gazing hard at her, inquiringly.

"My brother," Essie answered, devouring the letter. "He tells me all about our farm, and my father, and the chickens."

The young man leaned back and watched her respectfully with a stifled smile, till she had finished reading it. She went through with it unaffectedly to the end, and then laid it down, glowing. Laminski was charmed at so much natural simplicity.

"Dicky tells me all about our pets at the farm," she said, simply; and to Laminski the mere mention of the farm was delicious in its *naïveté*. "He tells me about my ducks, and how our neighbour has broken his arm, and that Biddy, the servant" (at home she would have said "the hired girl") "is engaged to be married."

Then she felt amused herself, to observe how formal all these domestic details of Vermont society sounded, even in her own ears, when one made French prose of them. But to Laminski, they were still stray breaths of Arcadia.

"I suppose you Russians can hardly understand what America's like," she added, after a pause, just to keep conversation rolling; "but we Americans love it."

Laminski started back like one stung. "Mademoiselle!" he cried, angrily.

"What have I done?" Essie asked, drawing away in surprise. "What have I said? Why do you start? Surely we Americans can love America?"

"*A la bonne heure!*" he answered, gazing hard at her in a strange way. "But why treat me like this? Why call me a Russian?"

"I thought you were one, from your name," Essie replied, taken aback. "Isn't Laminski Russian?"

"Thank Heaven, no," the dark young man answered, with a fierce flash of the eyes. "I'm a Pole. mademoiselle, and, like all good Poles, I hate and detest Russia. Call me a Chinaman, if you will, a negro, a monkey; but not a Russian."

"But isn't the Czar your Emperor, too?" Essie inquired, innocently. She was too unversed in European affairs to understand that a Pole could differ from a Russian otherwise than as a Californian differs from a New Englander.

Laminski suppressed an oath. Then he went on to explain to her in brief but sufficiently vigorous terms the actual state of feeling between Poles and Russians. Essie listened with the intent interest of the intelligent American; for, as a rule, with the average Yankee, you may feel pretty sure of finding that he is absolutely ignorant of any piece of information you may desire to impart to him, but eagerly anxious to know all about it. A great desire to learn and capacity for learning co-exist with an astounding want of information and culture.

"Then you are a Catholic?" Essie said, at last, after listening to his explanation with profound interest.

The young man gazed at her with an expression of amused surprise. "I am of whatever religion mademoiselle prefers," he answered, courteously — "except only the religion of the accursed Russians."

"I don't understand you," Essie said, much puzzled. Such easy-going gallantry was remote, indeed, from the sober, God-fearing New England model.

Laminski smiled again. "Well, we advanced politicians in Europe," he said, twirling his black moustache, "don't, as a rule, belong to any religion in particular—unless it be the religion of the ladies who interest us."

"Oh, how very sad," Essie replied, looking hard at him, pityingly. "But perhaps you may see clearer in time."

"Perhaps," Laminski answered, with a curious puckering of the corners of his mouth. "Though I hardly expect it."

"Will you take some tea?" Essie asked, just to relieve the tension. For the first time in her life she was dimly aware of that barrier of sex which she had never felt with the young men in Vermont. But these European men are so strange and so different! They always make you remember, somehow, that *they* are men and that *you* are a woman.

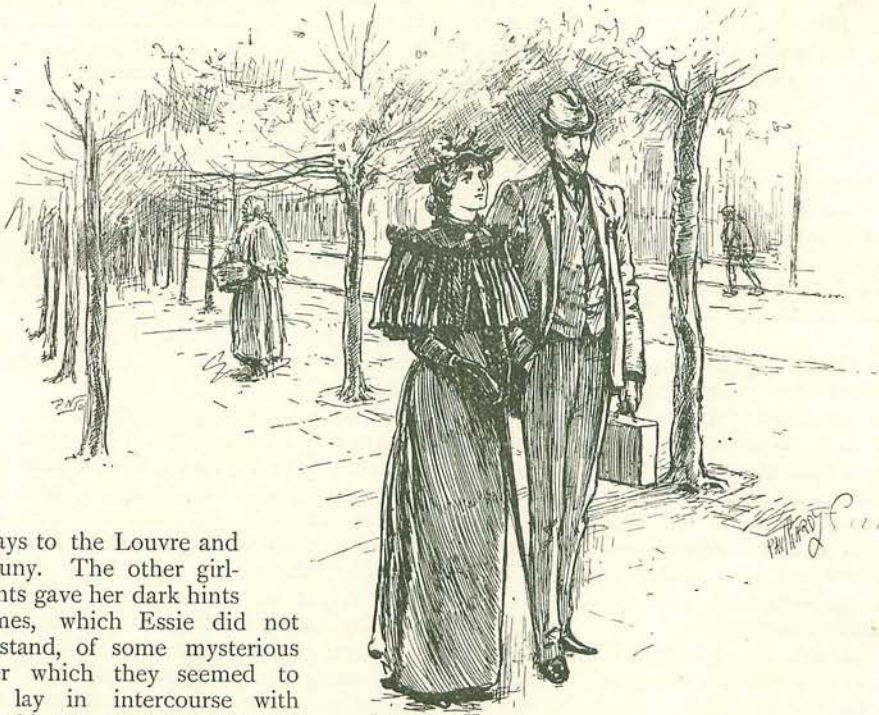
"Thank you," he replied; "mademoiselle is very good." And he sat looking on while Essie prepared it.

When it was ready, he tasted it. He had drunk tea in quantities when he was a boy near Warsaw, but never since the first day he came to Paris. "How innocent it is!" he exclaimed, as he tasted it. And Essie stared again, not knowing what to make of him.

From that day forth, it was the gossip of the *atelier* that Laminski had his eyes upon the little American. He walked home with her daily; he took her to *cafés* more reputable than was his wont; he escorted her on

The strangest part of it all was that the men themselves were silenced by her innocence. "*Chut!* Not a word of that!" *gros Kérouac* would exclaim, to the laughing group around him as Essie entered; "here comes the little one!" and, instantly, a demure silence fell on the noisy crowd; or if they laughed after that, they laughed at something where Essie's own silvery voice could join them merrily.

"As for Laminski, he is reformed," Alphonse said more than once, with a shrug, to Jules. "You would not know that man. He half forgets the Dead Rat, and hasn't been seen for fifteen days at Bruant's."



"HE WALKED HOME WITH HER DAILY."

Sundays to the Louvre and to Cluny. The other girl-students gave her dark hints at times, which Essie did not understand, of some mysterious danger which they seemed to think lay in intercourse with Laminski, or, for the matter of that, with any of the other men who frequented the studio. But the dark hints glided unnoticed past Essie. Clad in her triple mail of New England innocence, she never even guessed what the hinters were driving at. These men were gentlemen (as Essie understood the word), students of art like herself; and why should a self-respecting girl be afraid or ashamed of accepting their kind escort to the *café* or the theatre? She walked unharmed through the midst of that strange, unconventional Bohemian Paris, as unconventional as itself, by dint of pure innate goodness and simplicity.

Month by month went on, and indeed a strange change came over Laminski. He stopped away more and more from the *cafés chantants* and the open-air balls; he was found continually till late hours of the evening at Essie Lothrop's apartment. "And mind you," said Alphonse, "what is strange, it is all for the good motive. Laminski reformed! Is it a good one, that? Take my word for it, comrades, he will marry her, at church, and settle down into a *brave bourgeois*."

Meanwhile, Essie painted. Oh, how Essie

painted! Valentin's heart rejoiced. Since Marie Bashkirtseff, no *atelier* in Paris had had such a promising woman pupil. And Laminski painted, too; the pair of them, side by side: she, with grace and refinement; he, with fiery force and Slavonic vigour.

At last, the other students began to murmur that if that went much further, *allons!* that would end by compromising the little one. Laminski's brow clouded when they spoke these things darkly; and when Laminski was angry, it boded no good to anyone. However, in order that nobody should ever say he was seen too often coming down the stairs of that angel's house, he adopted an excellent and saving device: he removed from madame's, that Bohemian pension, and took a room *au sixième*, just above Essie's, in the self-same house in the Boulevard St. Michel. Sacred name of a dog, nobody can blame a man for being seen at night about his own apartments.

And then, he employed his spare hours at night by painting Essie as Ste. Geneviève in a great historical composition.

What wonder that Essie Lothrop fell in love with him? All men are human; still more, all women. He was so handsome, so clever, so fiery, so incomprehensible, so utterly unlike the young men in New England. That very incomprehensibility was a point in his favour; it appealed to woman's love of the mysterious and the infinite. Besides, Alphonse was right; strange to say, Laminski meant it all for the good motive. The more he looked at her, the more vividly did he feel that fate, blind fate, was drawing him against his will to marry that pure and beautiful girl—to marry her at church, like any ordinary *bourgeois*.

They never exactly arranged it. It grew up between them imperceptibly. As he painted her in her simple white robe as Ste. Geneviève, they found themselves addressing one another as Essie and Stanislas, "presque sans le savoir."

But step by step, they both of them came to regard it as natural—nay, almost inevitable. Essie admired him unspeakably: and indeed, there was much to admire in Laminski. A man who could paint with such poetical feeling, who could make such sweet fancies breathe upon canvas, must have much that was good in him. And then, his fiery eloquence! Essie loved to hear him, when work was over, pouring forth his untamable Slavonic soul in torrent floods of denunciation against tyrants. She didn't know much about this European world, to be sure, but she had

been taught to believe that tyrants were plentiful as blackberries in Europe. Here in France, of course, we were living under a Republic, which made it almost as good as America. But Russia and Germany, and all those other outlying countries—well, Stanislas told her the Czar was a monster, and she had read Mr. Kennan's articles in the *Century*, and could well believe it.

Once or twice a week, however, it was Stanislas's way to go out at night to some mysterious meeting. On such occasions, Essie asked him what society he frequented. Laminski smiled a curiously self-restrained smile, and answered in a somewhat evasive voice that it had something to do with the Friends of Freedom. These Friends of Freedom were often on his lips; Essie didn't exactly know what they were driving at, but she took their plan to be some benevolent scheme for emancipating the people of Poland by touching the hearts of the Russian officials. She fancied they disseminated humanitarian tracts, and in that bland belief she went on, unconcerned, with her painting at Valentin's. It was all very dreadful, no doubt, as Stanislas said, this European tyranny; but, with art at her door, she couldn't pretend to interest herself in politics. Her heart was absorbed in her work and in Stanislas.

Yet she loved his rhetoric. She loved to see him stop in the very act of painting Ste. Geneviève's halo; loved to see him stand, palette on thumb, in his room *au sixième*, and enforce with aggressive and demonstrative paint-brush his angry charge against the crimes of the *bourgeoisie*. Who the *bourgeoisie* might be, Essie didn't quite know, but she understood them to be wicked oppressors of the poor, which, of course, was quite enough to justify Stanislas's righteous indignation. He looked so handsome when he opened the vials of wrath on the heads of the *bourgeoisie* that Essie just loved to see and hear him demolish them. Nothing could be too bad for those wicked creatures, if half of what Stanislas said was true about them.

By-and-by, while Essie was still working at Valentin's, and Laminski was vaguely reflecting upon the ways and means by which at last to marry her, all Paris was startled one memorable morning by the terrible news of an Anarchist bomb-outrage. It was the first that had taken place since Essie's arrival; and it shocked and surprised her. To think people should act with such reckless folly!

At Valentin's that day, when the news



"SHE LOVED HIS RHETORIC."

came in, all was hubbub and excitement. Alphonse and the *gros* Kérouac were distinctly of opinion that Government should do something. Anarchists should be caught and fried in butter. The Gascon surmised that it would be not a bad plan to cut them bit by bit into little square pieces in the Place de la Concorde, as a warning to others. Valentin himself suggested, with grotesque minuteness, that they might be utilized for purposes of artistic study, by slow torture in *ateliers*, as models for gladiatorial pieces or Christian martyrdoms. Only Laminski held his tongue and shrugged his shoulders philosophically. He appeared to be neither surprised nor shocked at the tidings of the outrage. He was interested chiefly in the subsidiary question of what arrests had been made; and when the paper came in—extra special, hot pressed—he glanced at it with some concern, read the names and descriptions of the three workmen "detained on suspicion," and, lighting a cigarette with a nonchalant air, went on with his painting.

At home at the Boulevard St. Michel that evening, Essie spoke with some natural

horror and loathing of this meaningless explosion.

"How detestable," she cried, "to fling a bomb like that, in an open place, where you may injure anybody! So wrong, and so silly! I hope they've caught the wicked people who did it!"

Stanislas gazed at her with deep eyes of tender commiseration. He laid his hand on her golden head.

"My child," he said, caressingly, "you don't understand these questions of politics. How should you, indeed, who are a pure daughter of the people, a child of toil, born in a free land, from brave tillers of the soil, who cast off long since the rotten fetters of tyranny? It is otherwise in Europe. Here we have to fight a hard battle against the strong. We must use such poor arms as tyrants leave us. All is fair in war, and it is open war now between the *bourgeoisie* and the Friends of Liberty. They would kill us if they could;

we will kill them in return for it. You see, it is all a fair field and no favour."

"But, Stanislas," Essie cried, "you don't mean to say you approve of these wretches who maim and destroy innocent women and children? If their bombs only blew up tyrants—I don't know about that; you see, I'm a woman, and I never pretend to understand politics. America, of course, is a free country." (Essie really believed it.) "We have no tyrants. And if all you tell me about tyrants is true, I can almost understand how people who have lost their own fathers or sons by the despots' commands, might do anything almost to get rid of such wretches. But this is a Republic, where people are quite free, and I don't know why the Friends of Liberty should want to kill poor, helpless souls, sitting by chance at a *café*—good folks who, perhaps, may hate the tyrants just as much as they do. I don't see the use of indiscriminate revolution."

Stanislas ran his fingers gently over the smooth, bright locks. It was charming to hear her in defence of the *bourgeoisie*. The difference between their natures took his fancy, just as much as it had taken Essie's.

"You don't understand these things, my child," he said, fondling her affectionately. "By-and-by, when you've lived a little longer in Europe, and when I've had time to unfold my ideas to you slowly, you'll take a more sensible view of the matter. But, after all, why discuss it? Sit down in your chair by my side here, little one, and let me go on reading you those lines of Victor Hugo's."

Still, for the next few weeks, in spite of what he said, a vague uneasiness oppressed poor Essie. It was dreadful to think that dear Stanislas, who wouldn't himself have injured a mouse, should seem to palliate, and even to condone, the hateful crimes of these detestable Anarchists. It was dreadful, too, that he should speak of the people who perpetrated such acts by the same name as the one he applied to his own associates, the Friends of Freedom. Moreover, Essie noticed that during those next few weeks, while outrages were attempted in various parts of Paris, Stanislas went out more frequently than ever to his nocturnal meetings. Strange men came and went most mysteriously *au sixième*. It quite distressed her. Dear Stanislas was so good, she knew he could find excuses for the wickedest creatures, and she loved him for his charity. But she urged upon him often that the Friends of Freedom should protest in the strongest possible terms against these hateful crimes that were now being perpetrated every day around them. The more earnestly she spoke, the more did Stanislas smile and pinch her little ear: but he answered gravely that she was quite right, and, if only he knew how, he would do his best to prevent such outrages. Yet what could he say that was of any avail? They worked underground in darkness and silence: not even the police could discover the lairs of these secret conspirators.

So things went on for a week or two. To Essie's great delight, the more she talked about the wickedness of dynamite, the more frankly did Stanislas begin to agree with her. She could quite understand how his poetic mind, misled just at first by its hatred of tyrants, had failed to dwell enough at the earliest outset upon the atrocity of these outrages. But it was all coming home to him. She hoped she had made him feel how wicked these men were, and had enlisted the sympathies of the Friends of Liberty on the side of the poor creatures who sat unthinking in the

cafés or churches which the Anarchists menaced.

At last, one night, a little incident happened which filled Essie's soul with unspeakable forebodings. It was a beautiful spring evening; the horse-chestnuts were in bloom; she leaned out of her window and looked forth upon the boulevard. All the world was promenading. In the distance she saw Stanislas, coming from the direction of the great corner fountain, and by his side another man, with whom he was talking earnestly. How handsome he looked, and how vivid, dear Stanislas: she loved to see him when he talked with such eagerness. She watched them down the road; they approached the house. Stanislas was carrying a basket with singular care. Essie followed them with her eyes till they reached the gateway. She heard them on the stairs, still conversing closely. Pure curiosity impelled her to go to her door which opened upon the landing, and say "*Bonsoir*" to Stanislas. As she looked out, Stanislas's eyes caught hers. He raised his hat mechanically. As he did so, he gave a start. He seemed troubled and disquieted. For a second the basket almost dropped



"STANISLAS WAS CARRYING A BASKET."

from his hands; the other man caught it hastily away, with a gesture of horror not unmixed with anger. He said something aloud in Polish, which Essie did not understand. But she knew what it meant, for all that. It meant, "Take care, stupid!" And then, after a pause, "That was a narrow escape, that time!"

Yet even so, she had no glimpse of the truth. She merely felt in some dim way this was a Friend of Liberty, and that Stanislas and he were engaged in animated political discussion. She slunk back, abashed that she should have seemed to dear Stanislas to have been spying and eavesdropping. Her one strong feeling was a feeling of self-reproach for the obvious untimeliness of her awkward intervention.

The man stopped upstairs in Stanislas's room for two long hours; and Essie, listening hard, could hear no voices. That was odd, for, as a rule, when dear Stanislas's friends came, be they Poles or painters, they were noisy enough in all conscience, as she could hear for herself without any need for listening. But this evening, not a sound. What on earth could it mean? Essie's heart stood still. Could they be whispering together? And if whispering, what then? Must not that mean plotting? Plotting to get rid of that terrible Czar? Essie's tender little soul couldn't bear to think of it.

At last the man went. Essie heard Stanislas come to the door to say "Good-night" to him. "Au revoir, camarade!" "Au revoir, Laminski! Courage, mon ami!" and then—the heavy footsteps.

As soon as they had died away, Essie could stand it no longer. She stole quietly upstairs, and knocked a gentle knock at Stanislas's door. There was a moment's pause; then, slowly, hesitatingly, it opened an inch, and through that timid chink a white face looked out at her. Oh, so white and terrified! Who could ever have believed Stanislas Laminski's face could grow in a moment so transformed and unbeautiful? It frightened her to see it. But as for Stanislas himself, after a second's pause he became suddenly calm; his colour returned, and he burst out laughing. It was a foolish laugh, such as often comes upon one in the moment of reaction after a passing terror. "Ho, it's you, then, dear little one?" he cried, much relieved, bundling something away hurriedly, and closing the cupboard door. "You took me by surprise. I thought it was the *concierge*, come to ask for my rent, which I hadn't got ready for him."

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Essie looked in his face, and knew he was playing with her. But her own self-respect wouldn't allow her to say so to him. She only gave a glance of those innocent eyes, and asked him, earnestly: "Stanislas, you *must* tell me! What had you just now on the stairs in that basket?"

He gazed at her once more with a tender yet mocking smile. "My little one," he said, "it was thus that Eve fell: you have too much curiosity. Eggs, eggs, my dear Essie; and I was afraid of breaking them. See, here is the proof: I've been making an omelette for Lorikoff's supper." And he held up the dish, a small frying-pan, before her.

"Stanislas," she cried, drawing back, "you are deceiving me! I know you are playing with me. You ought to tell me this. I can't think what to make of it."

He laid his gentle hand on her bright head once more. "Essie, darling," he said, "I told you long ago, you don't understand, and will never understand, European politics."

She let him draw her to his side, and kiss her pale and troubled forehead. But that was all. Then she broke away from him, sobbing. With a heavy heart, she rushed downstairs to the lonely solitude of her own little bedroom. For the first time in her life, since she came to Paris, she was aware of her loneliness. Oh! why had she ever left her dear, quiet Vermont to come and study art in this terrible Europe?

All night long she lay awake. Yet even so, she never for one moment suspected the worst. She never once realized it. She only knew that Stanislas had some grave political secret he would not reveal to her, and she feared if she knew it she would greatly disapprove of it.

Next day was Sunday. Stanislas had told her before he would be engaged next morning, and she watched at the window to see him go out—sat and watched, she knew not why, in an agony of foreboding. At last she heard his step, light and resonant, on the staircase. He did not look in as he passed to say "Good-morning." That increased her suspicion, for 'twas Stanislas's way, even when going to his political meetings, to "take his sailing orders," as he playfully phrased it. This time he went rapidly out, without saying a word, and emerged into the street. He was carrying something in the pocket of his coat, nursing it tenderly as he went. Essie's heart stood still. What could Stanislas be bent upon?

She couldn't bear the suspense. She



"THEN SHE BROKE AWAY FROM HIM, SOBBING."

snatched up her hat and hurried eagerly after him.

As for Stanislas himself, he was by no means in a hurry. He strolled gently along, selecting the least crowded side of the street, and carefully avoiding contact with anybody. Essie followed him, unperceived, dogging his steps as he went, but pausing behind the trees that lined the boulevard whenever he looked behind him with a glance of caution. Even now, she hardly knew what it all could mean; she could not believe such horrors of anyone with whom she herself had mixed on terms of affection. Her simple little New England mind could not grasp the full awesomeness of Continental Anarchy.

Laminski crossed the Pont St. Michel, with a careless glance at Notre Dame as he passed, and took his way along the quays of the North Bank, by the least crowded side, in the direction of the Louvre. Essie followed him, breathless. At the corner by St. Germain l'Auxerrois, the man who had spent so long a time with him the night before stood idly lounging. Essie knew him in a moment. As they passed one another, the two men gave a nod of recognition, with a meaning glance. The stranger's eyes seemed to ask, "Is everything ready?" Laminski's answered, mutely, "Yes, ready, quite ready."

They took no further heed of one another; but Essie noticed that when Stanislas had passed on twenty yards or thereabouts, the other man followed him, just as she herself was doing, with an attentive air, as who should say, "I will watch that you do it."

Stanislas turned aside towards the church doors of St. Germain. The bells chimed merrily. People were flocking in and out to mass. Essie stood still and trembled.

Stanislas took a little bottle half imperceptibly between his left finger and thumb, and fumbled for a second with the unseen object in his coat pocket. Then he turned round with a look of recognition and triumph toward the other man in the background. "See here," he seemed to say; "I am keeping our compact." At the very same instant, his eye lighted on Essie. Suddenly his hand faltered; his cheek grew pale; the dare-devil look faded fast out of his eyes, and a terrible fear seemed to come over him at sight of her.

Essie felt she *must* find out what it meant. She rushed up to him imploringly. Stanislas held a long, round cylinder of iron in his hand. With a gesture of fierce love Essie flung her arms round him. His face grew deadly white. He tried to unwind her arms. "Take care, darling!" he cried. "Run as far as you can! If it explodes, it kills you.

It is not for such as you. Go, go; it's loaded!"

He raised his arm to fling it. A bomb! a bomb! Essie knew what it meant now. A ghastly light burst in upon her. These, then, were the methods of the Friends of Freedom! She seized his hand in her horror.

"Stanislas," she cried, wildly, "you shall not do it. You shall not burden your soul

with that awful crime. Though I die, I will save them. Though I die, I will save you." And she caught it in her hands and tore it fiercely away from him.

"Essie, Essie," he shrieked, in an access of mad remorse, "it's going to burst! Fling it away! Fling it away from you!"

But Essie held it still, and rushed out with a sudden thrill of heroic resolve into the wide

open space between St. Germain and the Louvre. She waved onearm around. "Danger! Danger!" she shouted.

The crowd, aghast, fell back to left and right. Stanislas rushed after her, and strove to wrench it from her grasp. But just as he approached her, Essie dashed it on the pavement by the rails of the Louvre, well away from the crowd of awe-struck people. Whatever came of it, she would save those innocent lives, she would save that guilty soul from the consequences of its own unholy endeavour.

A crash! A flash! A white cloud of dense smoke! Stanislas Laminski clapped his hands before his face. Essie stood there, immovable. When the cloud cleared away, broken fragments littered the pavement by the rails, and two bleeding corpses lay mangled on the ground — Laminski's and Essie's. Not one other was hurt. She had saved the innocent.

"She meant to set fire to the Louvre," said the papers; "but, owing to a fortunate scuffle with her accomplice, the bomb exploded prematurely."



"HE RAISED HIS ARM TO FLING IT."