

IRINEL

By B. DELAVRANCEA

When my parents died, both in the same year, I was quite small; I think I must have been about seven years old.

I wanted to cry over them both, for I loved them both, but when I approached their coffin I was not alone.

You must know that my father left a considerable fortune.

There were many people about him who could not endure him.

There was talk of a will.

There was one member of the family about whom my father said: "It is so long since he crossed our threshold that I do not understand why he is so offended with us."

It is unkind to tell you: it was his brother and my uncle, a very good man, with only one fault--he had lost his entire fortune at cards. I found among my father's papers a quantity of his I.O.U.'s, beautifully signed with flourishes, but unpaid.

I approached the coffin; I was sure that I should weep as no one had ever wept before.

My home without my parents!

Some one took me by the hand, and said to me as he kissed me on both cheeks:

"Iorgu, Iorgu, cry, Iorgu, for those who will never return!"

It was he! The uncle of the promissory notes!

Just when my eyes ought to have been full of tears, I caught sight of him, and when I looked round me and saw the other people, when I met so many pairs of eyes, then--I was ashamed and could not cry. Oh, it is a terrible thing to feel ashamed to cry when one is sorrowing!

Do you see how shy I am? Have you grasped it? It is difficult to understand. It is difficult, because you, readers, are different. Not one of you are the same as I am.

I was so good and timid that, when I completed my twenty-first year, I did not want to leave the guardianship of my eldest uncle, my mother's brother, a very gentle man like myself, and very shy like my mother.

It makes me laugh. Is it likely I shall tell you an untruth? Why should I? I don't ask you anything, you don't ask me anything. Why should I lie?

But it is true that I have not told you quite openly why I did not ask for an account of my minority, and why I stayed in that house, which was as white as milk--especially on moonlight nights--with its balcony, its oak staircase, its pillars with flowered capitals and wreaths round their centres.

Did I like the house? Yes.

Did I love my uncle who had managed my affairs? Yes. Was I ashamed,