

**TO TELL
YOU THE TRUTH**

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To tell you the truth by Leonard Merrick

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LEONARD MERRICK

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YOU THE TRUTH**

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LEONARD MERRICK

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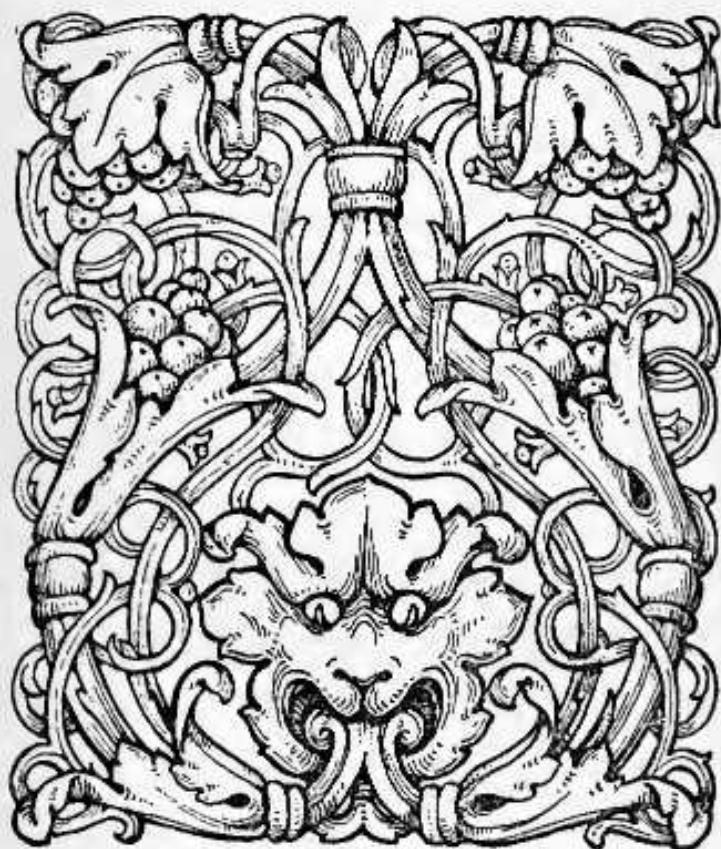
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YOU THE TRUTH
BY LEONARD MERRICK



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MADEMOISELLE MA MÈRE

SHE was born in Chauville-le-Vieux. Her mother gave piano lessons at the local Lycée de Jeunes Filles, and her father had been "professeur de violon" at the little Conservatoire. Music was her destiny. As a hollow-eyed, stunted child, who should have been romping in the unfrequented park, she had been doomed to hours of piano practice in the stuffy salon, where during eight months of the year a window was never opened for longer than it took to shake out the rug. Her name was Marie Lamande.

She had accepted her fate passively. If it had not been scales and exercises that made a prisoner of her, she recognised that it would have been fractions, or zoology. In France, schools actually educate, but few children have a childhood. On the first day of a term, when the wan girls reassemble, they sometimes ask one another—curious to hear what novelty the "holidays" may have yielded, amid the home work—"Did you have a little promenade during the *vacances*?"

Because its Lycée was widely known, English and American families came to stay in Chauville—the English pupils discovering what it was to be

taught with enthusiasm—and Marie knew French girls who had been initiated into the pleasures of tea-parties. Open-mouthed, she heard that the extravagant anglaise or américaine must have spent at least five or six francs on the cakes. But all the foreigners successively grew tired of inviting French children whose astonished mothers sent them trooping as often as they were asked, and, in no case, gave an invitation in return, and Marie herself never had the good luck to be asked.

Like her parents, she had been intended for the groove of tuition, and in due course tuition became her lot. But she was a gifted pianist, and ambitious; she dreamed of glory. Some years after she had been left alone, when her age was twenty-seven, she dared to escape from the melancholy town that she had grown to execrate. A slight little woman, without influence or knowledge of life, she aspired to conquer Paris. She attacked it with a sum sufficient to keep her for twelve months.

Her arrival at once frightened and enraptured her. In Chauville, at eight o'clock in the evening, a few of the shopkeepers had sat before their doorways, in the dark, a while; at nine, their crude streets were as vacant as the boulevards of the professional and independent classes, whose covert homes signified, even in the daytime, VISITORS WILL BE PROSECUTED. Behind the shutters of long avenues were over sixty thousand persons—most of them heroically hard-working—of a race that the pleasure-seeking English called “frivolous,” content with no sem-