

**A CIGARETTE-  
MAKER'S  
ROMANCE**

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A cigarette-maker's romance by F. Marion Crawford

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By F. MARION CRAWFORD

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## CHAPTER I

THE inner room of a tobacconist's shop is not perhaps the spot which a writer of fiction would naturally choose as the theatre of his play, nor does the inventor of pleasant romances, of stirring incident, or moving love-tales feel himself instinctively inclined to turn to Munich as to the city of his dreams. On the other hand, it is by no means certain that, if the choice of a stage for our performance were offered to the most contented among us, we should be satisfied to speak our parts and go through our actor's business upon the boards of this world. Some would prefer to take their properties, their player's crowns and robes, their aspiring expressions and their finely expressed aspirations before the audience of a larger planet; others, perhaps the majority, would choose, with more humility as well as with more common sense, the shadowy scenery, the softer footlights and the less exigent public of a modest asteroid, beyond the reach of our



earthly haste, of our noisy and unclean high-roads to honour, of our furious chariot races round the goals of fame, and, especially, beyond the reach of competition. But we have no choice. We are in the world and, before we know where we are, we are on one of the paths which we must traverse in our few score years between birth and death. Moreover, each man's path leads up to the theatre on the one side and down from it on the other. The inexorable manager, Fate, requires that each should go through with his comedy or his drama, if he be judged worthy of a leading part, with his scene or his act in another man's piece, if he be fit only to play the walking gentleman, the dumb footman, or the mechanically trained supernumerary who does duty by turns as soldier, sailor, courtier, husbandman, conspirator or red-capped patriot. A few play well, many play badly, all must appear and the majority are feebly applauded and loudly hissed. He counts himself great who is received with such an uproar of clapping and shout of approval as may drown the voice of the discontented; he is called fortunate who, having missed his cue and broken down in his words, makes his exit in the triumphant train of the greater actor upon whom all eyes are turned; he is deemed happy who, having offended no man, is allowed to depart in peace upon his downward road. Yet none of these players need pride themselves

much upon their success nor take to heart their failure. Long before most of them have slipped into the grave which waits at the foot of the hill, and have been wrapped comfortably in the pleasant earth, their names are forgotten by those who screamed with pleasure or hooted in disgust at their performance, their faces are no longer remembered, their great drama is become an old-fashioned mummery of the past. Why should they care? Their work is done, they have been rewarded or punished, paid with praise and gold or mulcted in the sum of their reputation and estate. Famous or infamous, in honour or in disrepute, in riches or in poverty, they have reached the end of their time, they are worn out, the world will have no more of them, they are worthless in the price-scale of men, they must be buried out of sight and they will be forgotten out of mind. The beginning is the same for all, and the end also, and as for the future, who shall tell us upon what basis of higher intelligence our brief passage across the stage is to be judged? Why then should the present trouble our vanity so greatly? And if our play is of so little importance, why should we care whether the scenery is romantic instead of commonplace, or why should we make furious efforts to shift a Gothic castle, a drawbridge, a moat and a waterfall into the slides occupied by the four walls of a Munich tobacconist's shop?

There is not even anything especial in the appearance of the place to recommend it to the ready pen of the word-painter. It is an establishment of very modest pretensions situated in one of the side streets leading to a great thoroughfare. As we are in Munich, however, the side street is broad and clean, the pavement is well swept and the adjoining houses have an air of solid respectability and wealth. At the point where the street widens to an irregular shape on the downward slope there is a neat little iron kiosque completely covered with brilliant advertisements, printed in black Gothic letters upon red and yellow paper. The point of vivid colour is not disagreeable, for it relieves the neutral tints of brick and brown stone, and arrests the eye, long wearied with the respectable parade of buildings. The tobacconist's shop is, indeed, the most shabby, or, to speak more correctly, the least smartly new among its fellow-shops, wherein dwell, in consecutive order, a barber, a watchmaker, a pastry-cook, a shoemaker and a colourman. In spite of its unattractive exterior, however, the establishment of 'Christian Fischelowitz, from South Russia,' enjoys a very considerable reputation. Within the high, narrow shop there is good store of rare tobaccos, from the mild Kir to the Imperial Samson, the aromatic Dubec and the pungent Swary. The dusty window beside the narrow door exhibits, it is