

**LEVER
CHARLES
JAMES**

DIARY AND NOTES OF
HORACE TEMPLETON,
ESQ. VOLUME I

Charles Lever

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Templeton, Esq. Volume I**

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Charles James Lever

Diary And Notes Of Horace Templeton, Esq. Volume I (of II)

CHAPTER I

Hôtel des Princes, Paris

It is a strange thing to begin a “Log” when the voyage is nigh ended! A voyage without chart or compass has it been: and now is land in sight – the land of the weary and heart-tired!

Here am I, at the Hôtel des Princes, *en route* for Italy, whither my doctors have sentenced me! What a sad record would be preserved to the world if travellers were but to fill up, with good faith, the police formula at each stage of the journey, which asks, “the object of the tour!” How terribly often should we read the two short words – “To Die.” With what sorrowful interest would one gaze at the letters formed by a trembling hand; and yet how many would have to write them! Truly, the old Italian adage, “*Vedere Napole es poi morire*” has gained a new signification; and, unhappily, a far more real one.

This same practice of physicians, of sending their patients to linger out the last hours of life in a foreign land, is, to my thinking, by no means so reprehensible as the generality of people make out. It is a theme, however, on which so many commonplaces can be strung, that common-place people, who, above all others, love their own eloquence, never weary of it. Away from his children – from his favourite haunts – from the doctors that understood his case – from his comfortable house – from the family apothecary, – such are the changes they ring; and if dying were to be done often, there would be much reason in all this. But it is not so; this same change occurs but once, and its approach brings with it a new train of thoughts and feelings from all that we have ever felt before. In that twilight hour of life, objects that have escaped our vision in the blaze of noon-day become clear and distinct; and, even to the least reflecting of minds, an increased power of perception and judgment is accorded – the *viaticum* for the coming journey!

I remember being greatly affected by the stories in the “Diary of a Physician,” when first I read them: they were powerfully written – and *so real!* Now this is the very quality they want: they are altogether unreal.

Terrific and heart-stirring as the death-bed scenes are, they are not true to nature: the vice and the virtue are alike exaggerated. Few, very few persons can bring themselves by an effort to believe that they are dying – easy as it seems, often as we talk of it, frequent as the very expression becomes in a colloquialism, it is still a most difficult process; but once thoroughly felt, there is an engrossing power, in the thought that excludes all others.’

At times, indeed, Hope will triumph for a brief interval, and “tell of bright days to come.” Hope! the glorious phantom that we follow up the Rhine – through the deep glens of the Tyrol, and over the Alps! – Only content to die when we have lost it!

There are men to whom the truth, however shocking, is always revealed – to whom the Lawyer says, “You have no case,” and the Physician confesses, “You have no constitution.” Happily or unhappily – I will not deny it may be both – I am one of these. Of the three doctors summoned to consult on my health, one spoke confidently and cheeringly; he even assumed that kind of professional jocularly that would imply, “the patient is making too much of it.” The second, more reserved from temperament, and graver, counselled caution and great care – hinted at the danger of the malady –

coupling his fears with the hopes he derived from the prospect of climate. The third (he was younger than either of the others, and of inferior repute,) closed the door after them, and resumed his seat.

I waited for some time expecting him to speak, but he sat in silence, and seemingly in deep thought. “And you, my dear doctor,” said I at length, “are you equally confident as your learned colleagues? Will the air of Italy – ?” He lifted up his eyes as I got so far, and their expression I shall not readily forget – so softly tender, so full of compassionate pity, did they beam. Never did a look convey more of sorrowing regret, nor more of blank despair. I hesitated – on *his* account I feared to finish what I had begun; but, as if replying to the expression of his glance, I added, “But still you advise me to go? You counsel the journey, at least?”

He blushed deeply before he could answer. He felt ashamed that he had failed in one great requisite of his art. I hastened to relieve him, by saying with a joyous air, “Well, I will go. I like the notion myself; it is at least a truce with physic. It is like drawing a game before one has completely lost it.”

And so here I am – somewhat wearied and fevered by the unaccustomed exertion, but less so than I expected.

I sincerely hope it is only the fastidiousness of a sick man, and not that most insufferable of all affectations – exclusiveness; but I will own I never disliked the mixed company of a steam-boat so much before. It is always an unpleasant part of our English travelling-experience, that little steam trip from our own coast to the French or Belgian shore. The pleasuring Cockney, only sufferable when sick – the runaway Bank clerk – the Hamburg Jew – the young lady going to Paris for spring fashions – the newly-married barrister, with his bit of tawdry finery from Norwood, silly, simpering, and fidgety – the Irish landlord, sulky and familiar by turns; all, even to the *Danseuse*, who, too refined for such association, sits in her carriage on deck, have a terrible sameness when seen, as I have done them, something like fifty times; nor can I suppose their united attractions greatly heightened by the figure of the pale gentleman, who coughs so incessantly, and whose wan cheek and colourless eye are seen to such formidable contrast with the bronzed and resolute face of the courier beside him.

Yet I would far rather think this want of due tolerance for my travelling companions was a symptom of my malady, than of that truly English disease – self-importance, I know of nothing that tracks our steps on the Continent so invariably, nor is there any quality which earns for us so much ill-will.

It is quite a mistake to suppose that these airs of superiority are only assumed by persons of a certain rank and fortune – far from it. Every denizen of Cheapside and the Minories that travels abroad, deems himself immeasurably above “the foreigner.” Strong in his City estimation, and charged with the leader in “The Times,” he struts about like an upstart visiting the servants’ hall, and expecting every possible demonstration of respect in return for his condescension. Hence the unhappy disparity between the situation of an Englishman and that of any other native abroad. Instead of rejoicing at any casualty which presents to him a chance-meeting with a countryman, he instinctively shrinks from it. He sees the Frenchman, the Italian, the German, overjoyed at recognition with some stranger from his own land, while *he* acknowledges, in such a contingency, only another reason for guardedness and caution. It is not that our land is wanting in those sterling qualities which make men respected and venerated – it is not that we are not, from principle and practice, both more exacting in all the requisites of good faith, and more tenacious of truth, than any people of the Continent; – it is simply that we are the least tolerant to every thing that differs from what we have at home, that we unscrupulously condemn whatever is un-English; and, not satisfied with this, we expect foreigners to respect and admire us for the very censure we pass upon their institutions.

There is, therefore, nothing so compromising to an Englishman abroad as a countryman; except —*hélas* that I should say so! – a countrywoman!

Paris is very beautiful in spring. There is something radiant and gorgeous in the commingled splendour of a great city, with the calmer beauties of leafy foliage and the sparkling eddies of the

bright river. Better, however, not to dwell longer on this theme, lest my gloomy thoughts should stray into the dark and crime-trodden alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, or the still more terrible filets de St. Cloud! How sad is it when one's temperament should, as if instinctively, suggest the mournful view of each object! Rather let me jot down a little incident of this morning – an event which has set my heart throbbing, and my pulse fluttering, at a rate that all the Prussic acid I have learned to take cannot calm down again.

There come now and then moments to the sick man, when to be well and vigorous he would consent to be poor, unfriended in the world – taking health alone for his heritage. I felt that half an hour ago – but it is gone again. And now to my adventure, for, in my unbroken dream of daily life, it seems such.

I have said I am lodged at the Hôtel des Princes. How different are my quarters from those I inhabited when first I saw this city! This would entail a confession, however, and I shall make it some other day. My salon is No. 21, the first drawing-room to the right as you turn from the grand staircase, and opening by the three spacious windows on a balcony overlooking the Rue de Richlieu. It is, indeed, a very splendid apartment, as much so as immense mirrors, gilding, bronze, and or moulu can make it. There are soft couches and chairs, and ottomans too, that would inspire rest, save when the soul itself was restless.

Well. I lounged out after breakfast for a short stroll along the Boulevards, where the shade of the trees and the well-watered path were most inviting. Soon wearied – I cannot walk in a crowd – I returned to the hôtel; slowly toiled up-stairs, waking the echoes with my teasing cough; and, instead of turning to the right, I went left, taking the wrong road, as I have so often done in life; and then, mistaking the numerals, I entered No. 12 instead of No. 21. Who would credit it, that the misplacement of a unit could prove so singular.

There was one change alone which struck me. I could not find the book I was reading – a little volume of Auerbach's village stories of the Schwartz-Walders. There was, however, another in its place, one that told of humble life in the provinces – not less truthful and heart-appealing – but how very unlike! It was Balzac's story of "Eugénie Grandet," the most touching tale I have ever read in any language. I have read it a hundred times, and ever with renewed delight. Little troubling myself to think how it came there – for, like an old and valued friend, its familiar features were always welcome – I began again to read it.

Whether the result of some peculiar organisation, or the mere consequence of ill health, I know not, but I have long remarked, that when a book has taken a strong hold upon me – fascinating my attention and engaging all my sympathies, I cannot long continue its perusal. I grow dreary and speculative; losing the thread of the narrative, I create one for myself, imagining a variety of incidents and scenes quite foreign to the intention of the writer, and identifying myself usually with some one personage or other of the story – till the upshot of all is, I drop off asleep, to awake an hour or so afterwards with a very tired brain, and a very confused sense of the reality or unreality of my last waking sensations.

It is, therefore, rather a relief to me, when, as in the present case, the catastrophe is known to me, and all speculation on the future denied. Poor Eugénie, how I felt for all your sorrows! – wondrous spectacle of a heart that could transmute its one absorbing passion into another, and from love, the fondest and most confiding, beget a pure and disinterested friendship!

At last the book glided unnoticed from my hand, and I slept. The sofa where I lay stood in a part of the room where a deep shadow fell from the closed *jalousies* of a window, so that any person might easily have entered or traversed the apartment without noticing me. I slept calmly and without a stir – my dreaming thoughts full of that poor girl's love. How little does any first passion depend upon the excellence of the object that creates it! How ideal, purely ideal, are those first emotions of the heart! I knew something of this, too; for, when young – very young, and very impressionable, with a strong dash of romance in my nature, that lent its Claude Lorraine tint to all I looked at, I fell

in love. Never was the phrase more fitting. It was no gradual or even imperceptible declension, but a headlong, reckless plunge; such as some confident and hardy swimmer, or very often a bold bather, makes into the water, that all may be quickly over.

I had been appointed *attaché* at Vienna, where Lord Newington was then ambassador – a widower with an only daughter. I was very young, fresh from Woolwich, where I had been studying for the Artillery service, when the death of a distant relative, who but a year before had refused to see me, put me in possession of a very large fortune. My guardian, Lord Elderton, an old *diplomate*, at once removed me from Woolwich, and, after a short sojourn at his house near Windsor, I was introduced into what Foreign-office people technically denominate “The Line,” and what they stoutly uphold as the only career for a gentleman.

I must some day or other jot down a few recollections of my life at Gortham, Lord Elderton’s seat, where, with Grotius and Puffendorf of a morning, and old Sir Robert Adams and Lord Hailiebury of an evening, I was believed to be inhaling the very atmosphere of learned diplomacy. Tiresome old gentlemen, whose thoughts stood fast at the time of Fox and Pitt, and, like a clock that went down in the night, steadily pointed to an hour long bygone. How wearied I was of discussions as to whether the King of Prussia would declare war, or the Emperor of Austria make peace! whether we should give up Malta, and lose Hanover! Pitt must, indeed, have been a man of “dark counsels,” for, whether he wished for an alliance with France or not was a nightly topic of debate, without a chance of agreement.

All these discussions, far from tending to excite my ardour for the career, served to make me dread it, as the most tiresome of all possible pursuits. The light gossip, too, over which they regaled themselves with such excellent relish, was insupportably dull. Who could care for the pointless repartees of defunct Grand Dukes, or the meaningless caprices of long-buried Archduchesses?

If, then, I was glad to escape from Gortham and its weary company, I had formed no very sanguine expectations of pleasure at Vienna.

I saw very little of the Continent in this my first journey. I was consigned to the charge of a cabinet messenger, who had orders to deliver me “safe” at Vienna. Poor M’Kaye, slight as I was, he left me very little of the small *coupé* we travelled in. He weighed something more than twenty stone, a heaving mass of fat and fretting; the great misery of his life being that Washington Irving had held him up to European ridicule, for he was the original “Stout Gentleman” whose heavy perambulations overhead suggested that inimitable sketch.

We arrived at Vienna some hours after dark, and after speedily traversing the narrow and winding streets of the capital, drew up within the *porte-cochère* of the English embassy. There was a grand ball at the embassy – a sovereign’s birth-day, or a coronation, I forget which – but I can well remember the dazzling splendour of the grand staircase, a blaze of wax-lights, and glittering with the brilliant lustre of jewelled dresses and gorgeous uniforms; but, perhaps, even more struck by the frequent announcement of names which were familiar to me as almost historical personages – the Ester-hazies, the Schwarzenbergs, and the Lichtensteins, when suddenly, with almost a shock, I heard my own untitled name called aloud, “Mr. Horace Templeton.” It is, I believe, a very old gentry name, and has maintained a fair repute for some half-dozen centuries; but, I own, it clinked somewhat meagre on the ear amid the high-sounding syllables of Austrian nobility.

I stood within the doorway of the grand salon, almost stunned by the sudden transition from the dark monotony of a night-journey to the noonday blaze of splendour before me, when a gentle tap from a bouquet on my arm aroused me, and a very silvery voice, in accents every one of which sank into my heart, bade me welcome to Vienna. It was Lady Blanche Newington that spoke – the most lovely creature that ever beauty and station combined to form. Fascinations like hers were new to me: she mingled gentleness of manner with a spiritual liveliness, that seemed ever ready to say the right thing at the right moment. The ease with which, in different languages, she addressed the various individuals of the company, employing all the little delicate forms of those conventionalities

French and Italian so abound in, and through all, an unobtrusive solicitude to please, that was most captivating.

My whole occupation that night was to steal after her unobserved, and gaze with delight at traits of manner that my ardent imagination had already elevated into graces of mind. I was very much in love – so much so that, ere a few weeks went over, my brother attachés saw it, and tormented me unceasingly on the subject. Nay, they went further: they actually told Lady Blanche herself, so that I dreaded to meet her, not knowing how she might treat my presumption. I fancied all manner of changes in her bearing towards me – reserve, coldness, perhaps disdain. Nothing of the kind! She was only more familiar and cordial than ever. Had I known more of the world, or of the feminine part of it, I should have read this differently: as it was, it overwhelmed me with delight. There was a frankness in her tone towards me, too; for, now, she discussed the temper and character of our mutual acquaintances, and with a shrewdness of criticism strange in one so young. At last we came to talk of a certain Count de Favancourt, the secretary of the French embassy; and as I mentioned his name she said, somewhat abruptly,

“I half suspect you don’t like the Count?”

“Who could?” replied I, eagerly; “is he not a ‘*Fat*?’” – using that precious monosyllable by which his countrymen designate a certain class of pretenders.

She laughed, and I went on, not sorry to have an opportunity of severity on one for whom I had conceived an especial hatred – indeed, not altogether without cause, since he had, on more than one occasion, marked the difference of our official rank in a manner sufficiently pointed to be offensive; and yet, the rigid etiquette observable to another embassy forbade all notice of whatever could be passed over.

Like a very young man, I did not bound my criticism on the Count by what I saw and observed in his manner, but extended it to every possible deduction I could draw from his air and bearing; winding up all by a very broadly-hinted doubt that those ferocious whiskers and that deep baritone were any thing but a lion’s skin over a very craven heart.

The last words were scarcely uttered, when a servant announced the Count de Favancourt. There is something, to a young person at least – I fancy I should not mind it now – so overwhelming on the sudden appearance of any one on whom the conversation has taken a turn of severity, that I arose confused and uneasy – I believe I blushed; at all events, I perceived that Lady Blanche remarked my discomfiture, and her eyes glanced on me with an expression I never observed before. As for the Count, he advanced and made his deep reverence without ever noticing me, nor, even while taking his seat, once shewed any consciousness of my presence.

Burning with indignation that I could scarce repress, I turned towards a table, and affected to occupy myself tossing over the prints and drawings that lay about – my maddened thoughts rendered still more insufferable from fancying that Lady Blanche and the Count seemed on far better and more intimate footing than I had ever known them before.

Some other visitors being announced, I took the occasion to retire unobserved, and had just reached the landing of the stairs when I heard a foot behind me. I turned – it was Favancourt. For the first time in my life, I perceived a smile upon his countenance – an expression, I own, that became it even less than his habitual stern scowl.

“You have done me the honour, sir,” said he, “to make some observations on my manner, which, I regret to learn, has not acquired your favourable opinion. Now, I have a strong sense of the *inconvenance* of any thing like a rupture of amicable relations between the embassy I have the honour to serve and that to which you belong. It is, then, exceedingly unpleasant for me to notice your remarks – it is impossible for me to let them pass unnoticed.”

He made a pause at these words, and so long that I felt bound to speak, and, in a voice that passion had rendered slightly tremulous, said,

“Am I to receive this, sir, in the light of a rebuke? because, as yet, I only perceive it conveys the expression of your own regret that you cannot demand an explanation I am most ready to afford you.

“My demand is somewhat different, sir, but, I trust, will be as readily accorded. It is this: that you resign your position as *attaché* to this embassy, and leave Vienna at once. There is no necessity that any unfavourable notice of this affair should follow you to another mission, or to England.”

“Stop, sir, I beg of you: I cannot be answerable for my temper, if you persist to outrage it. While you may press me to acknowledge that, while half an hour ago I only deemed you a ‘Fat,’ I now account you an imbecile.”

“Enough!” said the Count, passing down the stairs before me.

When I reached my lodgings, I found a “friend” from him, who arranged a speedy meeting. We fought that same evening, behind the Prater, and I received his ball in my shoulder – mine, pierced his hat. I was recalled before my wound permitted me to leave my bed. The day I left Vienna, Lady Blanche was married to Count Favancourt!

Some fourteen years had elapsed since that event and the time in which I now lay sleeping on the sofa; and yet, after all that long interval – with all its scenes of varied interests, its stormy passions, its hopes, its failures, its successes – the image of Blanche was before my mind’s eye, as brightly, joyously fair, as on the evening I first beheld her. I had forgotten all, that time and worldly knowledge had taught me, that, of all her attractions, her beauty only was real – that the graceful elegance of her bearing was only manner – that her gentleness was manner – her winning softness and delicacy mere manner – that all the fair endowments that seemed the rich promise of a gifted mind, united to a nature so bounteously endowed, were mere manner. She was *spirituelle*, lively, animated, and brilliant – all, from nothing but manner. To this knowledge I did not come without many a severe lesson. The teaching has been perfect, however, and made me what I am! Alas! how is it that mere gilding can look so like solid gold – nay, be made to cover more graceful tracery, and forms more purely elegant, than the real metal?

I have said that I slept; and, as I lay, dreams came over me – dreams of that long-past time, when the few shadows that fell over my path in life were rather spots where, like the traveller on a sunny road, one halts to breathe awhile, and taste in the cool shade the balmy influence of repose. I thought of Blanche, too, as first I had seen her, and when first she taught my heart to feel the ecstasy of loving, breathing into my nature high hopes and longings, and making of life itself an ideal of delight and happiness. And, as I dreamed, there stole over my senses a faint, thrilling memory of that young joy my heart had known, and a feeling like that of health and ardent buoyancy, which for years long I had not experienced. *Her* voice, tremulous with feeling, vibrating in all the passionate expression of an Italian song, was in my ears – I could hear the words – my very heart throbbed to their soft syllables as she sung the lines of Metastasio, —

“E tu, qui sa si te
Ti sovrerai di me.”

I started – there she was before me, bending over the harp, whose cords still trembled with the dying sounds; the same Blanche I had known and loved, but slightly changed indeed: more beautiful perhaps in womanhood than as a girl. Her long and silky hair fell over her white wrist and taper hand in loose and careless tresses, for she had taken off her bonnet, which lay on the floor beside her; her attitude was that of weariness – nay, there was a sigh! Good Heavens! is she weeping? My book fell to the ground; she started up, and, in a voice not louder than a whisper, exclaimed, “Mr. Templeton!”

“Blanche! – Lady Blanche!” cried I, as my head swam round in a strange confusion, and a dim and misty vapour danced before my eyes.

“Is this a visit, Mr. Templeton?” said she, with that soft smile I had loved so well; “am I to take this surprise for a visit?”

“I really – I cannot understand – I thought – I was certain that I was in my own apartment. I believed I was in Paris, in the Hôtel des Princes.”

“Yes, and most correct were all your imaginings; only that at this moment you are *chez moi*– this is our apartment, No. 12.”

“Oh, forgive me, I beg, Lady Blanche! – the similarity of the rooms, the inattentive habit of an invalid, has led to this mistake.”

“I heard you had been ill,” said she, in an accent full of melting tenderness; while taking a seat on a sofa, by a look rather than an actual gesture she motioned me to sit beside her: “you are much paler than you used to be.”

“I have been ill,” said I, struggling to repress emotion and a fit of coughing together.

“It is that dreadful life of England, depend upon it,” said she eagerly; “that fearful career of high excitement and dissipation combined – the fatigues of parliament – the cares and anxieties of party – the tremendous exertions for success – the torturing dread of failure. Why didn’t you remain in diplomacy?”

“It looked so very like idling,” said I, laughingly, and endeavouring to assume something of her own easy tone.

“So it is. But what better can one have, after all?” said she, with a faint sigh.

“When they are happy,” added I, stealing a glance at her beneath my eyelids. She turned away, however, before I had succeeded, and I could merely mark that her breathing was quick and hurried.

“I hope you have no grudge towards Favancourt?” said she hastily, and with a manner that shewed how difficult it was to disguise agitation. “He would be delighted to see you again! He is always talking of your success in the House, and often prophesies the most brilliant advancement for you.”

“I have outlived resentment,” said I, in a low whisper: “would that I could add, other feelings were as easily forgotten.”

Not at once catching my meaning, she turned her full and lustrous eyes upon me, and then suddenly aware of my words, or reading the explanation in my own looks, she blushed deeply, and after a pause said,

“And what are your plans now? do you remain here some time?”

“No, I am trying to reach Italy. It has become as classic to die there nowadays, as once it was to live in that fair land.”

“Italy!” interrupted she, blushing still deeper. “Favancourt is now asking for a mission there – Naples is vacant.”

This time I succeeded in catching her eyes, but she hastily withdrew them, and we were both silent.

“Have you been to the Opera yet?” said she, with a voice full of all its habitual softness.

“You forget,” said I, smiling, “that I am an invalid: besides, I only arrived here last night.”

“Oh, I am sure that much will not fatigue you. The Duc de Blancard has given us his box while we stay here, and we shall always have a place for you; and I pray you to come; if not for the music, for my sake,” she added hastily: “for I own nothing can be possibly more stupid than our nightly visitors. I hear of nothing but ministerial intrigue, the tactics of the *centre droit* and the opposition, with a little very tiresome gossip of the Tuileries; and Favancourt thinks himself political, when he is only prosy. Now, I long for a little real chit-chat about London and our own people. *Apropos*, what became of Lady Frances Gunnington? did she really marry the young cornet of dragoons and sail for India?”

“The saddest is to be told: he was killed in the Punjaub, and she is now coming home a widow.”

“How very sad! – was she as pretty as they said? – handsomer than Lucy Fox I have heard!”

“I almost think so.”

“That is great praise from you, if there be any truth in *on dits*. Had not you a kind of tenderness in that quarter?”

“Me!”

“Nay, don’t affect surprise: we heard the story at Florence, and a very funny story it was: that Lucy insisted upon it, if you didn’t propose for her, that she would for you, since she was determined to be mistress of a certain black Arabian that you had; and that you, fearing consequences, sent her the horse, and so compromised the affair.”

“How very absurd!”

“But is it not true? Can you deny having made a present of the steed?”

“She did me the honour to accept of a pony, but the attenuating circumstances are all purely imaginary.”

“*Si non vero e ben trovato.* – It was exactly what she would do!”

“An unfair inference, which I feel bound to enter a protest against. If we were only to charge our acquaintances with what we deem them capable of – ”

“Well, finish, I pray you.”

“I was only about to add, what would become of ourselves?”

“Meaning you and me, for instance?”

I bowed an assent.

“*Qui s’excuse, s’accuse,*’ says the adage,” rejoined she gaily: “I neither do one nor the other. At the same time, let me confess to one thing of which I am capable, which is, of detesting any one who in this age of the world affects to give a tone of moralizing to a conversation. Now I presume you don’t wish this. I will even take it for granted, that you would rather we were good friends, as we used to be long ago. – Oh dear, don’t sigh that way!”

“It was you that sighed!”

“Well, I am very sorry for it. It was wrong of *me*, and very wrong of *you* to tell me of it. But dear me! is it so late? can it really be three o’clock?”

“I am a quarter past; but I think we must both be fast. You are going out?”

“A mere drive in the Champs Elysées, where I shall pay a few visits and be back to dinner. Will you dine with us?”

“I pray you to excuse me – don’t forget I am a sick man.”

“Well, then, we shall see you at the Opera?”

“I fear not. If I might ask a favour, it would be to take the volume of Balzac away with me.”

“Oh, to be sure! But we have some others, much newer. You know ‘*Le Recherche de l’Absolu*’, already?”

“Yes; but I like ‘*Eugénie*’ still better. It was an old taste of mine, and as you quoted a proverb a few moments ago, let me give you another as trite and as true, —

‘*On revient toujours.*’”

“‘*A ses premières amours,*’”

said she, finishing; while with a smile, half playful, half sad, she turned toward the window, and I retired noiselessly, and without an adieu.

Heigho! how nervous and irritable I feel! The very sight of that handsome barouche that has driven from the hôtel, with its beautiful occupant lying listlessly back among the cushions, has set my heart a-beating far far too hurriedly. How is it that the laws that govern material nature are so inoperative in ours, and that a heart that never felt can make another feel? Heaven knows! It is not love; even my first passion, perhaps, little merited the name: but now, reading her as worldliness as taught roe to do-seeing how little relation exists between attractions and fascinations of the very highest order and any real sentiment, any true feeling – knowing how “*Life*” is her idol, how in that one idea is comprised all that vanity, self-love, false pride, and passion can form, – how is it that she, whom I recognise thus, that *she* can move me? There is nothing so like a battle as a sham fight in a review.

CHAPTER II

I must leave Paris at once. The weather is intolerably hot; the leaves that were green ten days ago already are shewing symptoms of the sear and yellow. Is it in compliment to the august inhabitant of the palace that the garden is so *empressé* to turn its coat? Shame on my ingratitude to say so! for I find that his Majesty has sent me a card of invitation to dine on Friday next. Another reason for a hurried departure! Of all moderate endurances, I know of none to compare with a dinner at the Tuileries. “Stay! – halt!” cries Memory; “I’ll tell you of one worse again – a dinner at Neuilly!”

The former is sure to include a certain number of distinguished and remarkable men, who, even under the chill and restraint of a royal entertainment, venture now and then on some few words that supply the void where conversation should be. At Neuilly it is strictly a family party, where, whatever ease may be felt by the illustrious hosts, the guests have none of it. Juvenal quaintly asks, If that can be a battle where you strike and I am beaten? so one is tempted to inquire, If that can be called society where a royal personage talks rapidly for hours, and the listener must not even look dissent? The King of the French is unquestionably a great man, but not greater in any thing than in the complete mystification in which he has succeeded in enveloping his real character, mingling up together elements so strange, so incongruous, and seemingly inconsistent, that the actual direction or object of any political move he has ever made, will always bear a double appreciation. The haughty monarch is the citizen king; the wily and secret politician, the most free-spoken and candid of men; the most cautious in an intrigue, the very rashest in action. How is it possible to divine the meaning, or guess the wishes, of one whose nature seems so Protean?

His foreign policy is, however, the master-stroke of his genius, – the cunning game by which he has conciliated the party of popular institutions and beguiled the friends of absolutism, delighting Tom Buncombe and winning praise from Nicholas. Like all clever men who are vain of their cleverness, he has always been fond of employing agents of inferior capacity, but of unquestionable devotion to his interests. What small intelligences – to use a phrase more French than English – were the greater number of the French ministers and secretaries I have met accredited to foreign courts! I remember Talleyrand’s observation, on the remark being made, was, “His Majesty always keeps the trumps in his own hand.” Though, to be sure, he himself was an evidence to the contrary – a “trump” led boldly out, the first card played!

So well did that subtle politician comprehend the future turn events must take, that on hearing, at two o’clock in the morning, that his Royal Highness the Duc d’Orléans had consented to assume the crown, he exclaimed, “And I am now ambassador at St. James’s!” It must have been what the Londoners call “good fun” to have lived in the days of the Empire, when all manner of rapid elevations occurred on every hand. The *commis* of yesterday, the special envoy to-day; a week ago a corporal, and now gazetted an officer, with the cross of the Legion – on the *grande route*, to become a general. A General, why not a Marshal of France – ay, or a King?

We have seen something of this kind in Belgium within a few years back – on a small scale, it is true. What strange ingredients did the Revolution throw up to the surface! what a mass of noisy, turbulent, self-opinionated incapables, who, because they had led a rabble at the Porte de Flandre, thought they could conduct the march of an army! And the statesmen! – good lack! the miserable penny-a-liners of the “Indépendant” and the “Lion Beige,” that admirable symbol of the land, who carries his tail between his legs. The really able, and, I believe, honest men, were soon overwhelmed by the influence of the priest party – the vultures who watched the fight from afar, and at last descended to take all the spoils of the victory.

Wandeweyer and Nothomb are both men of ability, the latter a kind of Brummagen Thiers, with the same taste for intrigue, the same subtle subserviency to the head of the state, and, in his

heart, the same cordial antipathy to England. But why dwell on these people? they will scarce occupy a foot-note in the old “Almanach.”

The diplomatic history of our day, if it ever be written, will present no very striking displays of high-reaching intellect or devoted patriotism; the men who were even greatest before the world were really smallest behind “the fact.” We deemed that Lord Aberdeen and Lord Palmerston, and Messrs. Guizot and Thiers, and a few more, were either hurrying us on to war or maintaining an admirable peace. But the whole thing resolves itself into the work of one man and one mind; neither very conspicuous, but so intently occupied, so devotedly persevering, that persistence has actually elevated itself to genius; and falling happily upon times when mediocrity is sublime, he has contrived to make his influence felt in every state of Europe. I speak not of Louis Philippe, but of his son-in-law, King Leopold.

“Let me make the ballads of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws,” said the great statesman; and in something of the same spirit his Majesty of Belgium may have said, “Let me make the royal marriages of Europe, and any one who pleases may choose the ministry.”

Apropos of the Roi Leopold, is it not difficult to understand a Princess Charlotte falling in love with his good looks? There is no disputing on this point. The most eminently successful man I ever knew in ladies’ society was Jack Beauclerc – “Caucasian Jack” we used to call him at Brookes’s. Everybody knows Jack was no beauty. Heavy beetling brows, a dark, saturnine, ill-omened expression, was ever on his features. Nor did his face light up at times, as one occasionally sees with such men; he was always the same sail misanthropic-looking fellow. Neither could one call him agreeable – at least I, meeting him very often, never found him so. But he was of a determined, resolute nature; one of those men that appear never to turn from any object on which they have set a strong will. This may have gone very far with ladies, who very often conceive a kind of esteem for whatever they fear. He said himself that his secret was, “always using them ill;” and certainly, if facts could bear out such a theory, one might believe him. Probably no man ever cultivated these tastes with such assiduity – these, I say, for play and duelling were also passions with him.

He was *attaché* to our mission at Naples before he was sixteen, and had the honour of wounding the old Marquis d’Espagna with the small sword at the same precocious era. The duel originated after a truly Italian manner; and as there are at Naples many incorrect reports of it, I will take the trouble to give the real one. The Marquis was an old man, married to one of the most beautiful women in Italy. She was a Venetian, and if my memory serves me right, a Guillardini by birth. She married him at eighteen to escape a convent, he being the richest noble under the rank of the blood royal at Naples. Very unlike the majority of Italian husbands, the Marquis was excessively jealous, would not permit the most innocent freedoms of his young and lovely wife, and eventually secluded himself and – worse still – her from all society, and never appeared except at a court ball, or some such festivity that there were no means of avoiding. It was at one of these festivities that the King, who liked to see his ball-room put forth its fairest aspect, bantered the Marquis on the rumour that had even reached the ears of royalty, as to his inordinate jealousy. The Marquis, whose old spirit of courtiership predominated even as strongly as his jealousy, assured his Majesty that the worthy people of Naples did him great injustice, and that, although conscious of the Marquesa’s great beauty and attractiveness, he had yet too high a sense of the distinguished place he and his family had always held in the esteem of his sovereign to feel jealous of any man’s pretension; adding, “If I have not admitted the conventional addition of a *cavalière servente* to my household, I would beg your Majesty to believe it is simply because I have seen no one as yet worthy to hand la Mar-quesa to her carriage or fold her shawl.”

“Admirably spoken, Marquis!” said the King; “the sentiment is quite worthy of one who has the best blood of Sicily in his veins. But remember what an artificial state of society we live in; think of our conventional usages, and what a shock it gives to public opinion when one, placed in so exalted a position as you are, so palpably affronts universal and admitted custom; recollect that your reserve

involves a censure on others, less suspicious, and, we would hope, not less rigidly honourable men, than yourself.”

“But what would your Majesty counsel?”

“Select a *cavalière* yourself, as little likely to excite your jealousy as you please; as little agreeable as possible, if you prefer it: but, comply at least so far with the world’s prescription, and do not shock our worthy Neapolitans by appearing to reflect upon them. There, what say you to that boy yonder? he is only a boy – he has just joined the English mission here. I’m sure he has formed no tender engagements to prevent you adopting him, and you will at least seem to conform with the usages of your neighbours.”

“If your Majesty commands – ”

“Nay, Marquis, I but advise.”

“Your Majesty’s wish is always a command. I feel proud to obey.”

“Then, I am very happy to say I wish it,” said the King, who turned away, dying to tell the court-party how miserable he had made the old Marquis.

Such are *débauché* Kings; the glorious prerogative of power becomes the mere agent of perverted ingenuity to work mischief and do wrong!

The poor Marquis lost no time to follow out the royal commands, and at once made acquaintance with Beauclerc – only too happy to be noticed in such a quarter. I know not whether the lady was much gratified by the result of this kingly interposition in her favour: some said, Yes, and that the youth was really gifted and *spirituel*, with a vein of quiet, caustic humour, most amusing; others – and I half incline to this notion – pronounced him dull and uninteresting. At all events, the Marquesa enjoyed the liberty of appearing often in public, and seeing more of the world than heretofore. She usually visited the San Carlos, too, twice a week; a great improvement in her daily life, as previously the Opera was denied her.

Immediately over the Marquesa’s box was the large box, or rather *salon*, belonging to the club of the Italian *nobili*, who frequented the theatre far less for the pleasures of the opera and the ballet than for the more exciting delights of *faro* and *écarté*; and here, nightly, were assembled all the most dissipated and spendthrift youth of a capital, whose very gravest and most exemplary citizens would be reckoned “light company” any where else.

High play, with all its consequences of passionate outbreaks, ruin, and duelling, were the pastimes of this ill-fated *loge*; and, notwithstanding the attractions the box underneath contained, Jack Beauclerc was far oftener in the second tier than the first. He was, indeed, a most inveterate gambler; and the few moments which he devoted to attending the Marquesa to her box, or her carriage, were so many instants of pregnant impatience till he was back at the play-table.

It was on one evening, when, having lost a very heavy sum, that his turn came to deal; and, with the superstitious feeling that only a play-man can understand, he resolved to stake a very large amount upon the game. The attention of the bystanders – never very deeply engaged by the *scène* – was now entirely engrossed by the play-table, where Beauclerc and his adversary were seated at *écarté*. It was that critical moment when the cards were dealt, but the trump not yet turned, and Beauclerc sat enjoying, with a gambler’s “malign” delight, the eager anxiety in the other player’s countenance, when suddenly a voice said, —

“Ha, Beauclerc! the Marquesa is rising – she is about to leave the theatre.”

“Impossible!” said he; “it is only the second act.”

“It is quite true, though,” rejoined another; “she is putting on her mantle.”

“Never mind our party, then,” cried Beauclerc’s antagonist; “I will hold myself ready to play the match out whenever you please.”

“I please it now, then!” said he, with a degree of energy that heavy losses had, in spite of him, rendered uncontrollable.

“Il Signor Beauclerc!” said a servant, approaching, “the Marquis d’Espagna desires to see you.”

“Tell him I am engaged – I can’t come,” said Beauclerc, turning up the trump-card, which he held out triumphantly before his adversary, saying, “The king!”

At the same instant the old Marquis entered, and, approaching the table, whispered a few words in his ear. If an adder had pierced him with its sting, Beauclerc could not have started with a more agonised expression; and he sprang from the chair and rushed out of the theatre, not by the door, however, where the Marquesa’s carriage was yet standing, but by a private passage, which led more easily towards his lodgings.

“What is this piece of news, that all are so amused by?” said the King, the next morning, as he was rising.

“Your majesty alludes to the Marquis d’Es-pagna, no doubt,” said Count Villafranca. “He challenged the young English *attaché* last night, at the theatre, and they have been out this morning; and, strange to say, that the Marquis, the very best swordsman we have ever had here, was disarmed and run through the side by his antagonist.”

“Is the wound dangerous?” said the King, coolly.

“I believe not, your Majesty. Beauclerc has behaved very well since it happened; he has not left the Marquis for a moment, and has, they say, asked pardon most humbly for his offence, which was, indeed, a very gross neglect of the Marchesa no husband could pardon.”

“So I heard,” said the King, yawning. “The Marquis is very tiresome, and a great bore: but, for all that, he is a man of spirit; and I am glad he has shewn this young foreigner that Italian honour cannot be outraged with impunity!”

Such is the true version; and, let people smile as they like at the theory, I can assure them it is no laughing matter. It is, doubtless, somewhat strange to our northern ideas of domestic happiness that a husband should feel called on to punish a want of sufficient attention to his wife, from the man whom the world regards as her lover. We have our own ideas on the subject; and, however sensitive we may feel on this subject, I sincerely hope we shall never push punctilio so far as the Neapolitans.

Such, without the slightest exaggeration, are the pictures Italy presents, for more impressive on the minds of our travelling youth than all that Correggio has touched or Raphael rendered immortal. Will their contemplation injure us? Shall we become by habit more lenient to vice, and less averse to its shame? or shall we, as some say, be only more charitable to others, and less hypocritical ourselves? I sadly fear that, in losing what many call “our affected prudery,” we lose the best safeguard of virtue. It was, at the least, the “livery of honour,” and we shewed ourselves not ashamed to wear it. And yet there are those who will talk to you – ay, and talk courageously – of the domestic LIFE OP ITALY!

The remark has been so often made, that by the mere force of repetition it has become like an acknowledged truth, that, although strangers are rarely admitted within its precincts, there exists in Italy and in Italian cities a state of domestic enjoyment to which our boasted home-life in England must yield the palm. Never was there any more absurd assertion less propped by fact – never was the “*ignotum*” so easily taken “*pro beatifico*.”

The domestic life of England has no parallel in any part of Europe, save, perhaps, in some of the French provinces, where the old “*vie du château*” presents something similar; but, even there, it rather lingers like the spirit of a departed time, the relic of bygone associations, than in the full reign of a strong national taste. In Germany, notwithstanding the general impression to the contrary, there is still less of it: the passion for household duties by the woman, the irresistible charms of beer and tobacco to the men, suggest different paths; and while she indulges her native fondness for cookery and counting napkins at home, he, in some wine-garden, dreams away life in smoke-inspired visions of German regeneration and German unity. In Italy, however, the points of contact between the members of a family are still fewer again: the meal-times, that summon around the board the various individuals of a house, are here unknown; each rises when he pleases, and takes his cup of coffee or chocolate in solitary independence – unseen, unknown, and, worse still, unwashed!

The drawing-room, that paradise of English home-existence, has no place in the life of Italy. The lady of the house is never seen of a morning; not that the cares of family, the duties of a household, engross her – not that she is busied with advancing the education of her children, or improving her own. No: she is simply *en deshabille*. That is, to be sure, a courteous expression for a toilet that has cost scarce five minutes to accomplish, and would require more than the indulgence one concedes to the enervation of climate to forgive.

The master of the family repairs to the café: his whole existence revolves around certain little tables, with lemonade, sorbets, and dominoes; his physical wants are, indeed, few, but his intellectual ones even fewer; he cares little for politics – less for literature; his thoughts have but one theme – intrigue; and his whole conversation is a sort of *chronique scandaleuse* on the city he lives in.

There is a tone of seeming good-nature – an easy, mock charity, in the way he treats his neighbours' backslidings – that have often suggested to strangers favourable impressions as to the kindness of the people; but this is as great an error as can be: the real explanation of the fact is the levity of national feeling, and the little impression that breaches of morality make upon a society dead to all the higher and better dictates of virtue – such offences being not capital crimes, but mere misdemeanours.

The dinner-hour occasionally, but not always, assembles the family to a meal that in no respect resembles that in more civilised communities. The periodical return of a certain set of forms – those *convenances* which inspire, at the same time, regard for others and self-respect – the admixture of courtesy with cordial enjoyment – have no representatives around a board where the party assemble, some dusty and heated, others wrapped up in dressing-gowns – all negligent, inattentive to each other, and weary of themselves – tired of the long, unbroken morning, which no occupation lightens, no care beguiles, no duty elevates. The Siesta follows, evening draws near, and at last the life of Italy dawns – dawns when the sun is setting! It is the hour of the theatre – the Theatre, the sole great passion of the nation, the one rallying point for every grade and class. Thither, now, all repair; and for a brief interval the silent streets of the city bustle with the life and movement of the inhabitants, as, on foot or in carriages, they hasten past.

The “business of the *scène*” is the very least among the attractions of a theatre in Italy. The opera-box is the drawing-room, the only one of an Italian lady; it is the club-room of the men. Whist and faro, ombre and piquet, dispute the interest with the *prima donna* or the *danseuse* in one box; while in another the fair occupant turns from the ardent devotion of stage-passion to listen to the not less impassioned, but as unreal, protestation of her admirer beside her.

That the drama, as such, is not the attraction, it is sufficient to say that the same piece is often played forty, fifty, sometimes seventy nights in succession, and yet the boxes lose few, if any, of their occupants. Night after night the same faces reappear, as regularly as the actors; the same groupings are formed, the selfsame smiles go round; and were it not that no trait of *ennui* is discernible, you would say that levity had met its own punishment in the dreariness of monotony. These boxes seldom pass out of the same family; from generation to generation they descend with the family mansion, and are as much a part of the domestic property of a house as the rooms of the residence. Furnished and lighted up according to the taste and at the discretion of the owner, they present to eyes only habituated to our theatres the strangest variety, and even discordance, of aspect: some, brilliant in wax-light and gorgeous in decoration, glitter with the jewelled dresses of the gay company; others, mysteriously sombre, shew the shadowy outlines of an almost shrouded group, dimly visible in the distance.

The theatre is the very spirit and essence of life in Italy. To the merchant it is the Bourse; it is the club to the gambler, the *café* to the loungeur, the drawing-room and the boudoir to the lady. But where is the domestic life?

CHAPTER III

Another note from Favancourt, asking me to dine and meet Alfred de Vigny, whose “Cinque Mars” I praised so highly. Be it so; I am curious to see a Frenchman who has preferred the high esteem of the best critics of his country, to the noisy popularity such men as Sue and Dumas write for.

De Vigny is a French Washington Irving, with more genius, higher taste, but not that heartfelt appreciation of tranquil, peaceful life, that the American possesses. As episode, his little tale, the “Canne de Jonc,” is one of the most affecting I ever read. From the outset you feel that the catastrophe must be sad, yet there is nothing harassing or wearying in the suspense. The cloud of evil, not bigger than a man’s hand at first, spreads gradually till it spans the heavens from east to west, and night falls solemn and dark, but without storm or hurricane.

I scarcely anticipate that such a writer can be a brilliant converser. The best gauge I have ever found of an author’s agreeability, is in the amount of dialogue he throws into his books. Wherever narrative, pure narrative, predominates, and the reflective tone prevails, the author will be, perhaps necessarily, more disposed to silence. But he who writes dialogue well, must be himself a talker. Take Scott, for instance; the very character of his dialogue scenes was the type of his own social powers: a strong and nervous common sense; a high chivalry, that brooked nothing low or mean; a profound veneration for antiquity; an innate sense of the humorous, ran through his manner in the world, as they display themselves in his works.

See Sheridan, too, he talked the School for Scandal all his life; whereas Goldsmith was a dull man in company. Taking this criterion, Alfred de Vigny will be quiet, reserved, and thoughtful; pointed, perhaps, but not brilliant. *Apropos* of this talking talent, what has become of it? French *causerie*, of which one hears so much, was no more to be compared to the racy flow of English table-talk, some forty years back, than a group of artificial flowers is fit to compete with a bouquet of richly scented dew-spangled buds, freshly plucked from the garden.

Lord Brougham is our best man now, the readiest – a great quality – and, strange as it may sound to those who know him not, the best-natured, with anecdote enough to point a moral, but no storyteller; using his wit as a skilful cook does lemon-juice – to flavour but not to sour the *plat*.

Painters and anglers, I have remarked, are always silent, thoughtful men. Of course I would not include under this judgment such as portrait and miniature painters, who are about, as a class, the most tiresome and loquacious twaddlers that our unhappy globe suffers under. Wilkie must have been a real blessing to any man sentenced to sit for his picture: he never asked questions, seldom indeed did he answer them; he had nothing of that vulgar trick of calling up an expression in his sitter; provided the man staid awake, he was able always to catch the traits of feature, and, when he needed it, evoke the *prevailing* character of the individual’s expression by a chance word or two. Lawrence was really agreeable – so, at least, I have always heard, for he was before my day; but I suspect it was that officious agreeability of the artist, the smartness that lies in wait for a smile or the sparkle of the eye, that he may transmit it to the panel.

The great miniature painter of our day is really a specimen of a miniature intelligence – the most incessant little driveller of worse than nothings: the small gossip that is swept down the back-stairs of a palace, the flat commonplaces of great people, are his stock-in-trade: the only value of such contributions to history is, that they must be true. None but kings could be so tiresome! I remember once sitting to this gentleman, when only just recovering from an illness, and when possibly I endured his forced and forty-horse power of small talk with less than ordinary patience. He had painted nearly every crowned head in Europe – kings, kaisers, archdukes, and grand-duchesses in every principality, from the boundless tracts of the Czar’s possessions, to those states which emulate the small green turf deposited in a bird’s cage. Dear me! how wearisome it was to hear him recount the ordinary traits

that marked the life of great people, as if the greatest Tory of us all ever thought Kings and Queens were anything but men and women!

I listened, as though in a long distressing dream, to narratives of how the Prince de Joinville, so terribly eager to burn our dockyards and destroy our marine, could be playful as a lamb in his nursery with the children. How Louis Philippe held the little Count de Paris fast in his chair till his portrait was taken. (Will he be able to seat him so securely on the throne of France?) How the Emperor of Austria, with a simplicity of a great mind and a very large head, always thought he could sit behind the artist and watch the progress of his own picture! I listened, I say, till my ears tingled and my head swam, and in that moment there was not a “bounty man” from Kentucky or Ohio that held royalty more cheaply than myself. Just at this very nick my servant came to whisper me, that an agent for Messrs. Lorch, Rath; et Co., the wine-merchants of Frankfort, had called, by my desire, to take an order for some hock. Delighted at the interruption, I ordered he should be admitted, and the next moment a very tall pretentious-looking German, with a tremendously frogged and Brandenburgerd coat, and the most extensive beard and moustaches, entered, and with all the ceremonial of his native land saluted us both, three times over.

I received him with the most impressive and respectable politeness, and seemed, at least, only to resume my seat after his expressed permission. The artist, who understood nothing of German, watched all our proceedings with a “miniature eye,” and at last whispered gently, “Who is he?”

“Heavens!” said I, in a low tone, “don’t you know? – he is the Crown Prince of Hanover!”

The words were not uttered when my little friend let fall his palette and sprang off his chair, shocked at the very thought of his being seated in such presence. The German turned towards him one of those profoundly austere glances that only a foreign bagman or an American tragedian can compass, and took no further notice of him.

The interview over, I accompanied him to the antechamber, and then took my leave, to the horror of Sir C – , who asked me at least twenty times, “why I did not go down to the door?”

“Oh, we are old friends,” said I; “I knew him at Gottingen a dozen years ago, and we never stand on any ceremony together.” My fiction, miserable as it was, served me from further anecdotes of royalty, since what private history of kings could astonish the man on such terms of familiarity with the Crown Prince of Hanover?

Talking of Hanover, and *apropos* of “humbugs,” reminds me of a circumstance that amused me at the time it occurred. Soon after the present King of Hanover ascended the throne, the Orangemen of Ireland, who had long been vain of their princely Grand Master, had sufficient influence on the old corporation of Dublin to carry a motion that a deputation should be despatched to Hanover, to convey to the foot of the throne the sincere and respectful gratulations of the mayor, aldermen, and livery of Dublin on the auspicious advent of his Majesty to the crown of that kingdom. The debate was a warm one, but the majority which carried the measure large; and, now, nothing remained but to name the happy individuals who should form the deputation, and then ascertain in what part of the globe Hanover lay, and how it should be come at.

Nothing but the cares of state and the important considerations of duty, could prevent the mayor himself accepting this proud task: the sheriffs, however, were free. Their office was a sinecure, and they accordingly were appointed, with a sufficient suite, fully capable of representing to advantage, abroad, the wealth, splendour, and intelligence of the “ancient and loyal corporation.”

One of the sheriffs, and the chief member of the mission, was, if I remember aright, a Mr. Timothy Brien; the name of the “lesser bear” I have forgotten. Tim was, however, the spokesman, whenever speaking was available; and when it was not, it was he that made the most significant signs.

I was at the period a very young *attaché* of the mission at Hanover; our secretary, Melmond, being *chargé d'affaires* in the absence of our chief, Melmond was confined to bed by a feverish attack, and the duties of the mission, limited to signing a passport or two once a-month, or some such form, were performed by me. Despatches were never sent. The Foreign Office told us, if we had any thing to

say, to wait for the Russian courier passing through, but not to worry them about anything. I therefore had an easy post, and enjoyed all the dignities of office without its cares. If I had only had the pay, I could have asked nothing better.

It was, then, of a fine morning in May that Count Beulwitz, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was announced, and the same moment entered my apartment. I was, I own it, not a little fluttered and flattered by this mark of recognition on the part of a minister, and resolved to play my part as deputy assistant *chargé d'affaires* to my very utmost.

“I come, Mr. Templeton,” said the minister, in a voice not quite free from agitation, “to ask your counsel on a question of considerable nicety; and as Mr. Melmond is still unable to attend to duty, you must excuse me if I ask you to bestow the very gravest attention upon the point.”

I assumed the most Talleyrand of looks, and he went on.

“This morning there has arrived here in four carriages, with great pomp and state, a special mission, sent from Ireland to convey the congratulations of the government on his Majesty’s accession to the throne. Now we have always believed and understood that Ireland was a part of the British empire, living under the same monarchy and the same laws. If so, how can this mission be accredited? It would be a very serious thing for us to recognise the partition of the British empire, or the separation of an integral portion, without due thought and consideration.

“It would be also a very bold step to refuse the advances of a state that deposes such a mission as this appears to be. Do your despatches from England give any clue by which we may guide our steps in this difficulty? have you heard latterly what are the exact relations existing between England and Ireland? You are aware that his Majesty is at Berlin, and Barring and Von der Decken, who know England so well, are both with him?”

I nodded assent, and, after a second’s silence, a strong temptation to quiz the Minister crossed my mind; and without even a guess at what this mysterious deputation might mean, I gravely hinted that our last accounts from Ireland were of the most serious nature. It was certainly true that kingdom had been conquered by the English and subjected to the crown of England, but there were the most well-founded reasons to fear that the arrangement had not the element of a permanence. The descendant of the ancient sovereigns of the land was a man of bold and energetic and adventurous character; he was a prince of the house of O’Connell, of which, doubtless, his Excellency had heard. There was no saying what events might have occurred to favour his ambitious views, and whether England might not have found the advantage of restoring a troublesome land to its ancient dynasty.

“How does the present mission present itself – how accredited?”

“From the court of Dublin, with the great seal, so far as I can understand the representation, for none of the embassy speak French.”

“That sounds very formal and regular,” said I, with deep gravity.

“So I think it, too,” said his Excellency, who really was impressed by the state-coach of Sheriff Timothy and three footmen in bag-wigs. “At any rate,” said he, “we must decide at once, and there can be no hesitation about the matter. I suppose we must give them an audience of the Crown Prince, and then let all rest till his Majesty returns, which he will do on Friday next.”

Without compromising myself by any assent, I looked as if he had spoken very wisely, and his Excellency departed.

That same afternoon two state-carriages of the court, with servants in dress livery, drew up at the Hof von London, the hôtel where the deputation had taken up their quarters, and a *Maréchal de Cour* alighted to inform the “Irish ambassador” that his Royal Highness the Crown Prince would receive their homage in the absence of the King. The intimation, more conveyed by pantomime than oral intelligence, was replied to by an equivalent telegraph; but the sheriffs, in all their gala, soon took their places in the carriage and set out for the palace.

Their reception was most flattering; enough to say, they had the honour to address and be replied to by one of the most courteous princes of Europe. An invitation to dinner, the usual civility

to a newly arrived mission, ensued, and the Irish embassy, overwhelmed with the brilliant success of their journey, returned to the hôtel in a state of exaltation that bordered on ecstasy.

Their corporation address, formidable by its portentous parchment and official seal, had puzzled the Foreign Office in no ordinary way, and was actually under their weighty consideration the following day, when the King most unexpectedly made his *entrée* into the capital. King Ernest heard with some amazement, not unmingled by disbelief, that an Irish diplomatic body had actually arrived at his court, and immediately demanded to see their credentials. There is no need to recount the terrible outbreak of temper which his Majesty displayed on discovering the mistake of his ministers. The chances are, indeed, that, had he called himself Pacha instead of King, he would have sentenced the Irish ambassador and his whole following to be hanged like onions on the one string. As it was, he could scarcely control his passion; and whatever the triumphant pleasures of the day before, when a dinner-card for the palace was conveyed by an aide-de-camp to the hotel, the “second Epistle to Timothy” was a very awful contrast to its predecessor. The hapless deputation, however, got leave to return unmolested, and betook themselves to their homeward journey, the chief of the mission by no means so well satisfied of his success in the part of the “Irish Ambassador.”

Now to dress for dinner. I wish I had said “No” to this same invitation.

Nothing is pleasanter when one is in health and spirits than a *petit diner*; nothing is more distressing when one is weak, low, and dejected. At a large party there is always a means of lying *perdu*, and neither taking any share in the cookery or the conversation. At a small table one must eat, drink, and be merry, though the *plat* be your doom and the talk be your destruction. There is no help for it; there is no playing “supernumerary” in farce with four characters.

Is it yet too late to send an apology? – it still wants a quarter of six, and six is the hour. I really cannot endure the fatigue and the exhaustion.

Holland, besides, told me that any excitement would be prejudicial. Here goes, then, for my excuse... So! I'm glad I've done it. I feel myself once more free to lie at ease on this ottoman and dream away the hours undisturbed.

“Holloa! what's this, Legrelle?” “De la part de Madame la Comtesse, sir. How provoking! – how monstrously provoking! She writes me, ‘You really must come. I will not order dinner till I see you. – Yours, &c. B. de F – .’ What a bore! and what an absurd way to incur an attack of illness! There's nothing for it, however, but submission; and to-morrow, if I'm able, I'll leave Paris.”

“Legrelle, don't forget to order horses for tomorrow at twelve.”

“What route does monsieur take?”

“Avignon – no, Strasbourg – Couilly, I think, is the first post. I should like to see Munich once more, or, at least, its gallery. The city is a poor thing, worthy of its people, and, I was going to say – no matter what! Germany, in any case, for the summer, as I am sentenced to die in Italy. I feel I am taking what the Irish call ‘a long day’ in not crossing the Alps till late in autumn!”

How many places there are which one has been near enough to have visited and somehow always neglected to see! and what a longing, craving wish to behold them comes over the heart at such a time as this? What, then, is “this time,” that I speak it thus?

How late it is! De Vigny was very agreeable, combining in his manner a great deal of the refinement of a highly cultivated mind, with the shrewd perception of a keen observer of the world. He is a *Légitimiste*, I take it, without any hope of his party. This, after all, is the sad political creed of all who adhere to the “elder branch.” Their devotion is indeed great, for it wars against conviction. But where can an honest man find footing in France nowadays? Has not Louis Philippe violated in succession every pledge by which he had bound himself? Can such an example of falsehood so highly placed be without its influence on the nation? Can men cry “Shame!” on the Minister, when they witness the turpitude of the Monarch?

But what hope does any other party offer? – None. Henri Cinque, a Bourbon of the *vieille roche*, gentle, soft-hearted, sensual, and selfish, who, if he returned to France to-morrow, would never

believe that the long interval since the Three Days had been any thing but an accident; and would not bring himself to credit the possibility that the succession had been ever endangered.

I believe, after all, one should be as lenient in their judgment of men's change of fealty in France as they are indulgent to the capricious fancies of a spoiled beauty. The nation, like a coquette, had every thing its own way. The cold austerities of principle had yielded to the changeful fortunes of success for so many years, that men very naturally began to feel that instability and uncertainty were the normal state of things, and that to hold fast one set of opinions was like casting anchor in a stream when we desired to be carried along by the current. Who are they who have risen in France since the time of the Great Revolution? Are they the consistent politicians, the men of one unvarying, unaltered faith? or are they the expediency makers, the men of emergencies and crises, yielding, as they would phrase it, to "the enlightened temper of the times" – the Talleyrands, the Soult, the Guizots of the day? – not to speak of one higher than them all, but not more conspicuous for his elevation than for the subserviency that has placed him there.

Poor Chateaubriand! the man who never varied, the man that was humblest before his rightful sovereign, and prouder than the proudest Marshal in presence of the Emperor, how completely forgotten is he – standing like some ruined sign-post to point the way over a road no longer travelled! A more complete revolution was never worked in the social condition of a great kingdom than has taken place in France since the time of the Emperor. The glorious career of conquering armies had invested the soldier's life with a species of chivalry, that brought back the old days of feudalism again. Now, it is the *bourgeoisie* are uppermost. Trade and money-getting, railroads and mines, have seized hold of the nation's heart; and where the *bâton* of a Maréchal was once the most coveted of all earthly distinctions, a good bargain on the Bourse, or a successful transaction in scrip, are now the highest triumphs. The very telegraph, whose giant limbs only swayed to speak of victories, now beckons to an expectant crowd the rates of exchange from London to Livorno, and with a far greater certainty of stirring the spirits it addresses.

I fell into all this moody reflection from thinking of an incident – I might almost call it story – I remembered hearing from an old cuirassier officer some years ago. I was passing through the north of France, and stopped to dine at Sedan, where a French cavalry regiment, three thousand strong, were quartered. Some repairs that were necessary to my carriage detained me till the next day; and as I strolled along the shady boulevards in the evening, I met an old soldier-like person, beside whom I dined at the table-d'hôte. He was the very type of a *chef-d'escadron* of the Empire, and such he really proved to be.

After a short preamble of the ordinary commonplaces, we began to talk of the service in which he lived, and I confess it was with a feeling of surprise I heard him say that the old soldiers of the Empire had met but little favour from the new dynasty; and I could not help observing that this was not the impression made upon us in England, but that we inclined to think it was the especial policy of the present reign to conciliate the affections of the nation by a graceful acknowledgment of those so instrumental to its glory.

"Is not Soult as high, or rather, is he not far higher, in the favour of his sovereign, Louis Philippe, than ever he was in that of the Emperor? Is not Moncey a man nobly pensioned as Captain of the Invalides?"

"All true! But where are the hundreds – I had almost said thousands, but that death has been so busy in these tranquil times with those it had spared in more eventful days – where are they, the old soldiers, who served in inferior grades, the men whose promotions for the hard fighting at Montereau and Chalons needed but a few days more of prosperity to have confirmed, but who saw their best hopes decline as the sun of the Emperor's glory descended?"

"What rewards were given even to many of the more distinguished, but whose principles were known to be little in accordance with the new order of things? What of Pajol, who captured a Dutch fleet with his cavalry squadrons; – ay! charged the three-deckers as they lay ice-locked in the Scheldt,

dismounted half of his force and boarded them, as in a sea-fight? Poor Pajol! he died the other day, at eighty-three or four, followed to the grave by the comrades he had fought and marched beside, but with no honours to his memory from the King or his government. No, sir, believe me, the present people never liked the Buonapartists; the sad contrasts presented by all their attempts at military renown with those glorious spectacles of the Empire were little flattering to them.”

“Then you evidently think Soult and some others owe their present favour, less to the eminence of their services than to the plasticity of their principles?”

“Who ever thought Soult a great general?” said he, abruptly answering my question by this transition. “A great military organizer, certainly – the best head for the administration of an army, or the Emperor’s staff – but nothing more. His capacity as a tactician was always third rate.”

I could not help acknowledging that such was the opinion of our own great captain, who has avowed that he regarded Massena as the most accomplished and scientific general to whom he was ever opposed.

“And Massena’s daughter,” cried the veteran indignantly, “lives now in the humblest poverty – the wife of a very poor man, who cultivates a little garden near Brussels, where *femmes de chambre* are sent to buy bouquets for their mistresses! The daughter of a *Maréchal de France*, a title once that Kings loved to add to their royalty, as men love to ennoble station by evidences of high personal desert!”

“How little fidelity, however, did these men shew to him who had made them thus great! how numerous were the desertions! – how rapid too!”

“Yes, there was an epidemic of treason at that time in France, just as you have seen at different epochs, here, other epidemics prevail: in the Revolution the passion was for the guillotine; then came the lust of military glory – that suited us best, and lasted longest; we indulged in it for twenty years: then succeeded that terrible revulsion, and men hastened to prove how false-hearted they could be. Then came the Restoration – and the passion was to be Catholic; and now we have another order of things, whose worst feature is, that there is no prevailing creed. Men live for the day and the hour. The King’s health – the state of Spain – a bad harvest – an awkward dispute between the commander of our squadron in the Pacific with some of your admirals, – anything may overturn the balance, and our whole political and social condition may have to be built up once more.”

“The great remedy against this uncertainty is out of your power,” said I: “you abolished the claims of Sovereignty on the permanent affection of the people, and now you begin to feel the want of ‘Loyalty.’”

“Our kings had ceased to merit the respect of the nation when they lost it.”

“Say, rather, you revenged upon them the faults and vices of their more depraved, but bolder, ancestors. You made the timid Louis XVI. pay for the hardy Louis XIV. Had that unhappy monarch but been like the Emperor, his court might have displayed all the excesses of the regency twice told, and you had never declared against them.”

“That may be true; but you evidently do not – I doubt, indeed, if any but a Frenchman and a soldier can – feel the nature of our attachment to the Emperor. It was something in which personal interest partook a large part, and the hope of future advancement, *through him*, bore its share. The army regarded him thus, and never forgave him perfectly, for preferring to be an Emperor rather than a General. Now, the very desertions you have lately alluded to, would probably never have occurred if the leader had not merged into the monarch.

“There was a fascination, a spirit of infatuating ecstasy, in serving one whose steps had so often led to glory, that filled a man’s entire heart. One learned to feel, that the rays of his own splendid achievements shed a lustre on all around him and each had his portion of undying fame. This feeling, as it became general, grew into a kind of superstition, and even to a man’s own conscience it served to excuse many grave errors, and some direct breaches of true faith.”

“Then, probably, you regard Ney’s conduct in this light?” said I.

“I know it was of this nature,” replied he, vehemently. “Ney, like many others, meant to be faithful to the Bourbons when he took the command. He had no thought of treachery in his mind; he believed he was marching against an enemy until he actually saw the Emperor, and then – ”

“I find this somewhat difficult to understand,” said I, dubiously. “Ney’s new allegiance was no hasty step, but one maturely and well considered. He had weighed in his mind various eventualities, and doubtless among the number the possibility of the Emperor’s return. That the mere sight of that low cocked-hat and the *redingote gris* could have at once served to overturn a sworn fealty and a plighted word – ”

“Have you time to listen to a short story?” interrupted the old dragoon, with a degree of emotion in his manner that bespoke a deeper interest than I suspected in the subject of our conversation.

“Willingly,” said I. “Will you come and sup with me at my hôtel, and we can continue a theme in which I feel much interest?”

“Nay; with your permission, we will sit down here – on the ramparts. I never sup: like an old campaigner, I only make one meal a-day, and mention the circumstance to excuse my performance at the table d’hôte: and here, if you do not dislike it, we will take our places under this lime-tree.”

I at once acceded to this proposal, and he began thus: —

CHAPTER IV

You are, perhaps, aware, that in no part of France was the cause of the exiled family sustained with more perseverance and courage than Auvergne. The nobles, who, from generation to generation, had lived as seigneurs on their estates, equally remote from the attractions and advantages of a court, still preserved their devotion to the Bourbons as a part of religious faith; nor ever did the evening mass of a château conclude without its heartfelt prayer for the repose of that “Saint Roi” Louis XVI., and for the blessing of heaven on him, his rightful successor, now a wanderer and an exile.

In one of these antique châteaux, whose dilapidated battlements and shattered walls shewed that other enemies than mere time had been employed against it, lived an old Count de Vitry: so old was he, that he could remember the time he had been a page at the court of Louis XV., and could tell many strange tales of the Regency, and the characters who flourished at that time.

His family consisted of two grandchildren, both of them orphans of his two sons. One had fallen in La Vendée; the other, sentenced to banishment by the Directory, had died on the passage out to Guadaloupe. The children were nearly of the same age – the boy a few months older than the girl – and regarded each other as brother and sister.

It is little to be wondered at if these children imbibed from the very cradle a horror of that system and of those men which had left them fatherless and almost friendless, destitute of rank, station, and fortune, and a proportionate attachment to those who, if they had been suffered to reign, would have preserved them in the enjoyment of all their time-honoured privileges and possessions.

If the members of the executive government were then remembered among the catalogue of persons accursed and to be hated, the names of the royal family were repeated among those saintly personages to whom honour and praise were rendered. The venerable Père Duclos, to whom their education was confided, certainly neglected no available means of instilling these two opposite principles of belief; and if Alfred de Vitry and Blanche were not impressed with this truth, it could not be laid to the charge of this single-hearted teacher; every trait and feature that could deform and disgrace humanity being attributed to one, and all the graces and ennobling virtues of the race associated with the name of the other. The more striking and impressive to make the lesson, the Père was accustomed to read a comment on the various events then occurring at Paris, and on the campaigns of the Republican army in Italy; dwelling, with pardonable condemnation, on the insults offered to the Church and all who adhered to its holy cause.

These appeals were made with peculiar force to Alfred, who was destined for an ecclesiastic, that being the only career which the old Count and his chaplain could satisfy themselves as offering any hope of safety; and now that the family possessions were all confiscated, and a mere remnant of the estate remaining, there was no use in hoping to perpetuate a name which must sink into poverty and obscurity. Blanche was also to become a member of a religious order in Italy, if, happily, even in that sacred land, the privileges of the Church were destined to escape.

The good Père, whose intentions were unalloyed by one thought unworthy of an angel, made the mistake that great zeal not unfrequently commits – he proved too much; he painted the Revolutionary party in colours so terrible, that no possible reality could sustain the truth of the portraiture. It is true, the early days of the Revolution warranted all he did or could say; but the party had changed greatly since that, or, rather, a new and a very differently minded class had succeeded. Marat, Danton, and Robespierre had no resemblance with Sieyes, Carnot, and Buonaparte. The simple-minded priest, however, recognised no distinction: he thought that, as the stream issued from a tainted source, the current could never become purer by flowing; and he delighted, with all the enthusiasm of a *dévote*, to exaggerate the evil traits of those whose exploits of heroism might have dazzled and fascinated unthinking understandings.

Alfred was about sixteen, when one evening, nigh sunset, a peasant approached the Château in eager haste to say that a party of soldiers were coming up the little road which led towards the house, instead of turning off, as they usually did, to the village of Puy de Dôme, half a league further down the valley.

Père Duclos, who assumed absolute authority over the household since the old Count had fallen into a state of childlike dotage, hastened to provide himself with the writ of exemption from billet the Directory had conferred on the château – an *amende* for the terrible misfortunes of the ruined family – and advanced to meet the party, the leading files of which were already in sight.

Nothing could less have suggested the lawless depredators of the Republic than the little column that now drew near. Four chasseurs-à-pied led the van, their clothes ragged and torn, their shoes actually in ribbons; one had his arm in a sling, and another carried his shako on his back, as his head was bound up in a handkerchief, whose blood-stained folds shewed the marks of a severe sabre-cut. Behind them came a litter, or, rather, a cart with a canvass awning, in which lay the wounded body of their officer; the rear consisting of about fourteen others, under the command of a sergeant.

They halted and formed as the old Père approached them, and the sergeant, stepping to the front, carried his hand to his cap in military salute; and then, without waiting for the priest to speak, he began a very civil, almost an humble, apology, for the liberty of their intrusion.

“We are,” said he, “an invalid party, *en route* for Paris, with an officer who was severely wounded at the bridge of Lodi.” And here he lowered his voice to a whisper: “The poor lieutenant’s case being hopeless, and his constant wish – his prayer, – being to see his mother before he dies, we are pushing on for her Château, which is near St. Jean de Luc, I hear.”

Perhaps the mention of the word Château – the claim of one whose rank was even thus vaguely hinted at – had nearly an equal influence on the Père with the duties of humanity. Certain is it he laid less stress than he might have done on the writ of exemption, and blandly said that the out-offices of the Château should be at their disposal for the night; apologising if late events had not left its inhabitants in better circumstances to succour the unfortunate.

“We ask very little, Père,” said the sergeant, respectfully – “some straw to sleep on, some rye-bread and a little water for supper; and to-morrow, ere sunrise, you shall see the last of us.”

The humility of the request, rendered even more humble by the manner in which it was conveyed, did not fail to strike the Père Duclos, who began to wonder what reverses had overtaken the “Blues” (the name the Republicans were called), that they were become thus civil and respectful; nor could he be brought to believe the account the sergeant gave of a glorious victory at the Ada, nor credit a syllable of the bulletin which, in letters half-a-foot long, proclaimed the splendid achievement.

A little pavilion in the garden was devoted to the reception of the wounded lieutenant, and the soldiers bivouacked in the farm-buildings, and some even in the open air, for it was the vintage-time, and the weather delightful. There was nothing of outrage or disturbance committed by the men; not even any unusual noise disturbed the peaceful quiet of the old Château; and, except that a lamp burned all night in the garden-pavilion, nothing denoted the presence of strangers.

Before day broke the men were mustered in the court of the Château; and the sergeant, having seen that his party were all regularly equipped for the march, demanded to speak a few words to the Père Duclos. The Père, who was from his window watching these signs of approaching departure with some anxiety, hastily descended on hearing the request.

“We are about to march, reverend father,” said the sergeant, saluting, “all of us, save one – our poor lieutenant; his next billet will be for another, and, we hope, a better place.”

“Is he dead?” asked the Père, eagerly.

“Not yet, father; but the event cannot now be far off. He raved all through the night, and this morning the fever has left him, but without strength, and evidently going fast. To take him along with us would be inhuman, were it even possible – to delay would be against my orders; so that nothing

else is to be done than leave him among those who would be kind to his last hours, and minister to the wants of a death-bed.”

The Père, albeit very far from gratified by his charge, promised to do all in his power; and the sergeant, having commanded a “present arms” to the Château, wheeled right-about and departed.

For some days the prediction of the sergeant seemed to threaten its accomplishment at every hour. The sick man, reduced to the very lowest stage of debility, appeared at moments as if struggling for a last breath; but by degrees these paroxysms grew less frequent and less violent: he slept, too, at intervals, and awoke seemingly refreshed; and thus between the benefits derived from tranquillity and rest, a mild and genial air, and his own youth, his recovery became at length assured, accompanied, however, by a degree of feebleness that made the least effort impossible, and even the utterance of a few words a matter of great pain and difficulty.

If, during the most sad and distressing periods of the sick bed, the Père indirectly endeavoured to inspire Alfred’s mind with a horror of a soldier’s life – depicting, by the force of the terrible example before him, the wretchedness of one who fell a victim to its ambition – so did he take especial care, as convalescence began to dawn, to forbid the youth from ever approaching the pavilion, or holding any intercourse with its occupant. That part of the garden was strictly interdicted to him, and the very mention of the lieutenant at last forbidden, or only alluded to when invoking a Christian blessing upon enemies.

In this way matters continued till the end of autumn, when the Père, who had long been anxiously awaiting the hour when the sick man should take his leave, had one morning set off for the town to make arrangements for his departure, and order post-horses to be ready on the following day.

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