

LEVER CHARLES JAMES

THE DALTONS; OR, THREE
ROADS IN LIFE. VOLUME II

Charles Lever

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Roads In Life. Volume II**

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Charles James Lever

The Daltons; Or, Three Roads In Life. Volume II (of II)

CHAPTER I. A MORNING OF MISADVENTURES

“Well, my Lord, are we to pass the day here,” said Count Trouville, the second of the opposite party, as Norwood returned from a fruitless search of George Onslow, “or are we to understand that this is the English mode of settling such matters?”

“I am perfectly ready, Monsieur le Comte, to prove the contrary, so far as my own poor abilities extend,” said Norwood, calmly.

“But your friend has disappeared, sir. You are left alone here.”

“Which is, perhaps, the reason of your having dared to insult me,” rejoined the other; “that being, perhaps, the French custom in such affairs.”

“Come, come, gentlemen,” interposed an old cavalry officer, who acted as second friend to Guilmar, “you must both see that all discussion of this kind is irregular and unseemly. We have come here this morning for one specific purpose, – to obtain reparation for a great injury. The gentleman who should have offered us the amende has suddenly withdrawn himself. I offer no opinion on the fact that he came out accompanied by only one friend; we might, perhaps, have devised means to obviate this difficulty. For his own absence we have no remedy. I would therefore ask what you have to propose to us in this emergency?”

“A little patience, – nothing more. My friend must have lost his way; some accident or other has detained him, and I expect to see him here every instant.”

“Shall we say half an hour longer, my Lord?” rejoined the other, taking out his watch. “That will bring us to eight o’clock.”

“Which, considering that our time was named ‘sharp six,’” interposed Trouville, “is a very reasonable ‘grace.’”

“Your expression is an impertinence, Monsieur,” said Norwood, fiercely.

“And yet I don’t intend to apologize for it,” said the other, smiling.

“I ‘m glad of it, sir. It’s the only thing you have said to-day with either good sense or spirit.”

“Enough, quite enough, my Lord,” replied the Frenchman, gayly. “‘Dans la bonne société, on ne dit jamais de trop.’ Where shall it be, and when?”

“Here, and now,” said Norwood, “if I can only find any one who will act for me.”

“Pray, my Lord, don’t go in search of him,” said Trouville, “or we shall despair of seeing you here again.”

“I will give a bail for my reappearance, sir, that you cannot doubt of,” cried Norwood, advancing towards the other with his cane elevated.

A perfect burst of horror broke from the Frenchmen at this threat, and three or four immediately threw themselves between the contending parties.

“But for this, my Lord,” said the old officer, “I should have offered you my services.”

“And I should have declined them, sir,” said Norwood, promptly. “The first peasant I meet with will suffice;” and, so saying, he hurried from the spot, his heart almost bursting with passion. With many a malediction of George – with curses deep and cutting on every one whose misconduct had served to place him in his present position – he took his way towards the high-road.

“What could have happened?” muttered he; “what confounded fit of poltroonery has seized him? a fellow that never wanted pluck in his life! Is it possible that he can have failed now? And this

to occur at the very moment they are beggared! Had they been rich, as they were a few months back, I'd have made the thing pay. Ay, by Jove! I 'd have 'coined my blood,' as the fellow says in the play, and written a swingeing check with red ink! And now I have had a bad quarrel, and nothing to come of it! And so to walk the high-roads in search of some one who can load a pistol."

A stray peasant or two, jogging along to Florence, a postilion with return horses, a shabbily dressed curate, or a friar with a sack behind him, were all that he saw for miles of distance, and he returned once more to interrogate the calessino driver as to the stranger who accompanied him from the city.

Any one whose misfortune it may have been to make inquiries from an Italian vetturino of any fact, no matter how insignificant or unimportant, will sympathize with Norwood's impatience at the evasive and distrustful replies that now met his questions. Although the fact could have no possible concern or interest for him, he prevaricated and contradicted himself half-a-dozen times over, as to the stranger's age, country, and appearance, so that, utterly baffled and provoked, the Viscount turned away and entered the park.

"I, too, shall be reported missing, I suppose," said he, bitterly, as he walked along a little path that skirted a piece of ornamental water. "By Jupiter! this is a pleasant morning's work, and must have its reparation one day or other."

A hearty sneeze suddenly startled him as he spoke; he turned hastily about, but could see no one, and yet his hearing was not to be deceived! He searched the spot eagerly; he examined the little boat-shed, the copse, the underwood, – everything, in fact, – but not a trace of living being was to be seen; at last a slight rustling sound seemed to issue from a piece of rustic shell-work, representing a river god reclining on his urn, and, on approaching, he distinctly detected the glitter of a pair of eyes within the sockets of the figure.

"Here goes for a brace of balls into him," cried Norwood, adjusting a cap on his pistol. "A piece of stonework that sneezes is far too like a man to be trusted."

Scarcely was the threat uttered, when a tremulous scream issued from within, and a voice, broken with terror, called out, —

"D-don't fire, my Lord. You'll m-m-murder me. I'm Purvis – Sc-Sc-Scroope Purvis."

"How did you come to be there, then?" asked Norwood, half angrily.

"I 'll tell you when I g-get out!" was the answer; and he disappeared from the loophole at which he carried on the conversation for some seconds. Norwood began to fancy that the whole was some mystification of his brain, for no trace of him was to be had; when he emerged from the boat-house with his hat stripped of the brim, and his clothes in tatters, his scratched face and hands attesting that his transit had not been of the easiest. "It's like a r-r-rat-hole," cried he, puffing for breath.

"And what the devil brought you there?" asked Norwood, rudely.

"I ca-came out to see the fight!" cried he; "and when you're inside there you have a view of the whole park, and are quite safe, too."

"Then it was you who drove out in the calessino meant for the doctor?" said Norwood, with the air of a man who would not brook an equivocation.

"Yes; that was a d-d-dodge of mine to get out here," said he, chuckling.

"Well, Master Purvis," said Norwood, drawing his arm within his own, "if you can't be the 'doctor,' you shall at least be the 'second.' This is a dodge of mine; so come along, and no more about it."

"But I ca-can't; I never was – I never could be a se-se-second."

"You shall begin to-day, then, or my name's not Norwood. You've been the cause of a whole series of mishaps and misfortunes; and, by Jove! if the penalty were a heavier one, you should pay it."

"I tell you, I n-never saw a duel; I – I never f-fought one; I never will fight one; I don't even know how they g-go about it."

“You shall learn, sir, that ‘s all,” said Norwood, as he hastened along, dragging the miserable Purvis at his side.

“But for you, sir,” continued he, in a voice thick with passion, – “but for you, sir, and your inveterate taste for prying into what does not concern you, we should have experienced no delay nor disappointment this morning. The consequences are, that I shall have to stand where another ought to have stood, and take to myself a quarrel in which I have had no share.”

“H-how is that? Do – do – do tell me all about it!” cried Purvis, eagerly.

“I ‘ll tell you nothing, sir, not a syllable. Your personal adventures on this morning must be the subject of your revelations when you get back to Florence, if ever you do get back.”

“Why, I – I’m – I’m not going to fight anybody,” exclaimed he, in terror.

“No, sir, but *I* am; and in the event of any disastrous incident, *your* position may be unpleasant. If Trouville falls, you ‘ll have to make for Lombardy, and cross over into Switzerland; if he shoots me, you can take my passport; it is *visé* for the Tyrol. As they know me at Innsprück, you ‘d better keep to the southward, – some of the smaller places about Botzen, or Brixen.”

“But I don’t know Bo-Bo-Botzen on the map! and I don’t see why I ‘m to sk-sk-skulk about the Continent like a refu-refu-refugee Pole!”

“Take your own time, then; and, perhaps, ten years in a fortress may make you wiser. It’s no affair of mine, you know; and I merely gave you the advice, as I ‘m a little more up to these things than you are.”

“But, supposing that I ‘ll have no-nothing to do with the matter, that I ‘ll not be present, that I refuse to see – ”

“You shall and you must, sir; and if I hear another word of objection out of your mouth, or if you expose me, by any show of your own poltroonery, to the ribald insolence of these Frenchmen, by Heaven! I ‘ll hold your hand in my own when I fire at Count Trouville.”

“And I may be mu-mu-murdered!” screamed Purvis. “An innocent man’s bl-blood shed, all for nothing!”

“Bluebeard treated his wives to the same penalty for the same crime, Master Purvis. And now listen to me, sir, and mark well my words. With the causes which have led to this affair you have no concern whatever; your only business here is in the capacity of my second. Be present when the pistols are loaded; stand by as they step the ground; and, if you can do no more, try, at least, to look as if you were not going to be shot at.” Neither the counsel nor the tone it was delivered in were very reassuring; and Purvis went along with his head down and his hands in his pockets, reflecting on all the “accidents by firearms” he had read of in the newspapers, together with the more terrible paragraphs about fatal duels, and criminal proceedings against all concerned in them.

The Frenchmen were seated in the garden, at a table, and smoking their cigars, as Norwood came up, and, in a few words, explained that a countryman of his own, whom he had met by chance, would undertake the duties of his friend.

“I have only to say, gentlemen,” he added, “that he has never even witnessed an affair of this kind; and I have but to address myself to the loyal good faith of Frenchmen to supply any deficiencies in his knowledge. Mr. Purvis, Messieurs.”

The old Colonel, having courteously saluted him, took him to a short distance aside, and spoke eagerly for a few minutes; while Norwood, burning with anxiety and uneasiness, tried to smoke his cigar with every semblance of unconcern.

“I ‘m sure, if you think so,” cried Scroope, aloud, “I’m not the m-man to gainsay the opinion. A miss is as g-g-good as a m-mile; and as he did n’t strike him – ”

“Tonnerre de Dieu! sir – strike him!” screamed the old soldier. “Did you say strike him?”

“No, I didn’t – I couldn’t have meant that,” broke in Purvis. “I meant to remark that, as there was no mischief done – ”

“And who will venture to say that, sir?” interposed the other. “Is it nothing that a Frenchman should have been menaced?”

“That’s a gr-great deal, – a tremendous deal. It’s as much as beating another man; I know that,” muttered poor Purvis, deprecatingly.

“Is this a sneer, sir?” asked the Colonel, drawing himself up to his full height.

“No, no, it ain’t; no, upon my soul, I ‘m quite serious. I never was less disposed for a jest in my life.”

“You could never have selected a less opportune moment for one, sir,” rejoined the other, gravely. “Am I to conclude, sir,” resumed he, after a second’s interval, “that we have no difference of opinion on this affair?”

“None whatever. I agree with you in everything you have s-said, and everything you in-intend to say.”

“Your friend will then apologize?” resumed the Colonel.

“He shall, – he must.”

“Simply expressing his regret that an unguarded action should have occasioned a misconception, and that in lifting his arm he neither intended the gesture as a menace nor an insult. Is n’t that your meaning?”

“Just so; and that if he *had* struck he would n’t have hurt him.”

“Feu d’enfer! sir, what *are* you saying? or do you mean this for a mockery of us?” screamed the Colonel, in a fit of passion.

“You terrify me so,” cried Purvis; “You are so impeimpe-impetuous, I don’t know what I ‘m saying.”

The Frenchman measured him with a glance of strange meaning. It was evident that such a character was somewhat new to him, and it required all his skill and acuteness to comprehend it “Very well, sir,” said he, at last, “I leave the details entirely to yourself; speak to your friend, arrange the matter between you, and let us finish the affair as speedily as may be.”

“What is all this delay about?” muttered Norwood, angrily, as the other joined him; “is there any difficulty in stepping twelve or twenty paces?”

“None; but we’ve hit upon a b-better plan, and you’ve only to say that you ‘re sorry for it all, that you did n’t m-mean anything, and that you never did b-b-beat a Frenchman, nor will you ever do so in future.”

“Why, what do you mean?” asked Norwood, in astonishment.

“That we ‘ll all go back and lunch at the ‘Luna;’ for there’s no-nothing to fight about.”

Norwood pushed by him contemptuously, and with hurried steps walked up to where the old Colonel stood. “You are a French officer, sir,” said he, “and I rely upon your honor that, whether from the ignorance or inaptitude of that gentleman, no blame may attach itself to me in this business. I have no apology to offer, nor any amende save one.”

“Very well, sir, we are ready,” said the Colonel. “I will ask one of my countrymen to act for you, for I see you are in very indifferent hands.”

And now, like men who were well accustomed to the task, they set about the details of the duel; while Purvis, being at full liberty, slipped from the spot, and retired into the wood.

“You ‘ve won the first fire, my Lord,” said a young Frenchman to Norwood. “The conditions are twelve paces – back to back – to torn at the word, and fire.”

Norwood bowed, and, without speaking, followed the other to the spot where he was to stand. As he waited thus, pistol in hand, he was directly opposite to the place wherein Purvis had taken refuge, and who, seeing Norwood in front of him, with a cocked pistol, and his finger on the trigger, uttered a scream of terror, and fell flat on the ground. Before the rest could discover the cause of the outcry, a shout from outside of “The Police!” “The Gendarmes!” was heard, and Dr. Grounsell rushed into the garden, followed by several dismounted dragoons. In an instant all were away. Norwood

sprang over a low balcony into a vineyard; while in various directions the others scampered off, leaving Purvis alone upon the field.

But too happy to have fallen into the safe keeping of the authorities, Purvis accepted his captivity with a most placid contentment.

“Where’s Captain Onslow? Have you seen him, sir?” whispered Grounsell to him.

“I have seen everybody, but I don’t re-remember anything. It’s all a dr-dr-dream to me.”

“There was no duel? They hadn’t fought?” asked Grounsell.

“I – I – I think not; pro-pro-probably not,” said Purvis, whose faculties were still very cloudy.

Grounsell turned away from him in disdain, and entered the house. To all his inquiries from the waiters of the inn the answers were vague and insufficient, nor could the doctor discover either what had occurred, or the reasons of the long delay on the ground. Meanwhile the *Carabinieri*, stimulated by liberal promises of reward, were searching the park in every quarter, and scouring the country around to arrest the fugitives; and the peasantry, enlisted in the pursuit, hastened hither and thither to aid them. Whether really unable to come up with them, or, as is more probable, concurring in the escape through bribery, the dragoons returned to the inn after about an hour’s absence, without the capture of a single prisoner.

Grounsell cursed their Italian indolence, and reviled every institution of their lazy land. How he raved about foreign falsehood and rascality, and wished for a London detective and a magistrate of Bow Street! Never did Lord Palmerston so thirst to implant British institutions in a foreign soil, as did he to teach these “macaroni rascals what a good police meant.” What honest indignation did he not vent upon English residents abroad, who, for sake of a mild climate and lax morality, could exchange their native country for the Continent; and at last, fairly worn out with his denunciations, he sat down on a bench, tired and exhausted.

“Will you t-t-tell them to let me go?” cried Purvis. “I’ve done nothing. I never do anything. My name is Purvis, – Sc-Sc-Scroope Purvis, – bro-brother to Mrs. Ricketts, of the Villino Zoe.”

“Matters which have no possible interest for *me*, sir,” growled out Grounsell; “nor am I a corporal of gendarmes, to give orders for your liberation.”

“But they ‘ll take me to – to prison!” cried Purvis.

“With all my heart, sir, so that I be not your fellow captive,” rejoined the doctor, angrily, and left the spot; while the police, taking as many precautions for securing Purvis as though he had been a murderer or a house-breaker, assisted him into a calèche, and, seated one on either side of him, with their carbines unslung, set out for Florence.

“They’ll take me for Fr-Fr-Fra Diavolo, if I enter the city in this fashion,” cried Purvis; but certainly his rueful expression might have belied the imputation.

Grounsell sat down upon a grassy bench beside the road, overcome with fatigue and disappointment. From the hour of his arrival in Florence, he had not enjoyed one moment of rest. On leaving Lady Hester’s chamber he had betaken himself to Sir Stafford’s apartment; and there, till night daybreak, he sat, breaking the sad tidings of ruin to his old friend, and recounting the terrible story of disasters which were to crush him into poverty. Thence he hastened to George Onslow’s room; but he was already gone. A few minutes before he had started with Norwood for Pratolino, and all that remained for Grounsell was to inform the police of the intended meeting, while he himself, wisely suspecting that nothing could go forward in Florence unknown to Jekyl, repaired to that gentleman’s residence at once.

Without the ceremony of announcement, Grounsell mounted the stairs, and opened the door of Jekyl’s apartment, just as its owner had commenced the preparations for his breakfast. There was an almost Spartan simplicity in the arrangements, which might have made less composed spirits somewhat abashed and ill at ease. The little wooden platter of macaroni, the small coffee-pot of discolored hue and dinged proportions, the bread of Ethiopian complexion, and the bunch of shrivelled grapes offered a meal irreproachable on the score of either costliness or epicurism. But

Jekyl, far from feeling disconcerted at their exposure to a stranger's eyes, seemed to behold them with sincere satisfaction, and with a most courteous smile welcomed the doctor to Florence, and thanked him for the very polite attention of so early a visit.

"I believe I ought to apologize for the unseasonable hour, sir," blundered out Grounsell, who was completely thrown off his balance by this excessive urbanity; "but the cause must plead for me."

"Any cause which has conferred the honor on me is sure of being satisfactory. Pray come nearer the table. You 'll find that macaroni eat better than it looks. The old Duke de Montmartre always recommended macaroni to be served on wood. His maxim was, 'Keep the "plat d'argent" for a mayonnaise or a galantine.'"

"Excuse me if I cannot join you, sir. Nothing but a matter of extreme importance could warrant my present intrusion. I only reached this city a few hours back, and I find everything at the Mazzarini Palace in a state of discord and confusion. Some are questions for time and consideration; others are more immediately pressing. One of these is this affair of George Onslow's. Who is he about to meet, and for what?"

"His antagonist is a very agreeable young man; quite a gentleman, I assure you, attached to the French mission here, and related to the 'Morignys,' whom you must have met at 'Madame Parivaux's' formerly."

"Never heard of one of them, sir. But what's the quarrel?"

"It originated, I believe, in some form of disputation, – an altercation," simpered Jekyl, as he sweetened and sipped his coffee.

"A play transaction, – a gambling affair, eh?"

"I fancy not; Count Guilmard does not play."

"So far, so good," said Grounsell. "Now, sir, how is it to be arranged? – what settlement can be effected? I speak to you frankly, perhaps bluntly, Mr. Jekyl, for my nature has few sympathies with courteous ambiguities. Can this business be accommodated without a meeting?"

Jekyl shook his head, and gave a soft, plaintive little sigh.

"Is friendly interference out of the question, sir?"

Another shake of the head, and a sigh.

"Is there any law in the country? Can the police do nothing?"

"The frontiers are always easily accessible," simpered Jekyl, as he stole a look at his watch.

"Ay, to be sure," broke in Grounsell, indignantly; "the very geography of the Continent assists this profligacy, and five paces over an imaginary boundary gives immunity in a case of murder! Well, sir, come along with me to the place of meeting. It is just possible that we may be of some service even yet."

"Nothing could be more agreeable to me than the opportunity of cultivating your acquaintance, Dr. Grounsell; but I have already sent off a few lines to Lord Norwood, to apologize for my absence, – a previous engagement."

"What! at this hour of the morning, sir!" burst out Grounsell.

"Even at this early hour, doctor, our cares commence," said Jekyl, blandly.

"Upon this occasion they must give way to duties, then," said Grounsell, sternly. "The word may sound strangely in your ears, sir, but I use it advisedly you have been well received and hospitably entertained by this family. They have shown you many marks of kindness and attention. Now is the opportunity to make some sort of requital. Come, then, and see if this young man cannot be rescued from peril."

"You touch my feelings in the very tenderest spot," said Jekyl, softly. "When gratitude is mentioned, I am a child, – a mere child."

"Be a man, then, for once, sir; put on your hat and accompany me," cried Grounsell.

"Would you have me break an appointment, doctor?"

“Ay, to be sure I would, sir, – at least, such an appointment as I suspect yours to be. This may be a case of life or death.”

“How very dreadful!” said Jekyl, settling his curls at the glass. “Pascal compares men to thin glass phials, with an explosive powder within them, and really one sees the force of the similitude every day; but Jean Paul improves upon it by saying that we are all burning-glasses of various degrees of density, so that our passions ignite at different grades of heat.”

“Mine are not very far from the focal distance at this moment,” said Grounsell, with savage energy; “so fetch your hat, sir, at once, or –”

“Unless I prefer a cap, you were going to add,” interposed Jekyl, with a sweet smile.

“We must use speed, sir, or we shall be too late,” rejoined the doctor.

“I flatter myself few men understand a rapid toilet better,” said Jekyl, rising from the table; “so if you’ll amuse yourself with ‘Bell’s Life,’ ‘Punch,’ or Jules Janin, for five minutes, I ‘m your man.”

“I can be company for myself for that space, sir,” said the other, gruffly, and turned to the window; while Jekyl, disappearing behind the drapery that filled the doorway, was heard humming an opera air from within.

Grounsell was in no superlative mood of good temper with the world, nor would he have extended to the section of it he best knew the well-known eulogy on the “Bayards.” “Swindlers,” “Rakes,” and “Vagabonds” were about the mildest terms of the vocabulary he kept muttering to himself, while a grumbling thunder-growl of malediction followed each. The very aspect of the little chamber seemed to offer food for his anger; the pretentious style of its decoration jarred and irritated him, and he felt a wish to smash bronzes and brackets and statues into one common ruin.

The very visiting-cards which lay scattered over a Sèvres dish offended him; the names of all that were most distinguished in rank and station, with here and there some little civility inscribed on the corner, – “Thanks,” “Come, if possible,” or “Of course we expect you,” – showing the social request in which Jekyl stood.

“Ay,” muttered he to himself, “here is one that can neither give dinners nor balls, get places nor pensions nor orders, lend money nor lose it, and yet the world wants him, and cannot get on without him. The indolence of profligacy seeks the aid of his stimulating activity, and the palled appetite of sensualism has to borrow the relish from vice that gives all its piquancy. Without him as the fly-wheel, the whole machinery of mischief would stand still. His boast is, that, without a sou, no millionaire is richer than he, and that every boon of fortune is at his beck. He might add, that in his comprehensive view of wickedness he realizes within himself all the vice of this good capital. I ‘d send such a fellow to the treadmill; I ‘d transport him for life; I ‘d sentence him to hunt kangaroos for the rest of his days; I ‘d –” He stopped short in his violent tirade; for he suddenly bethought him how he himself was at that very moment seeking aid and assistance at his hands; and somewhat abashed by the recollection, he called out, “Mr. Jekyl, are you ready yet?”

No answer was returned to this question, and Grounsell repeated it in a louder voice. All was silent, and not even the dulcet sounds of the air from “Lucia” broke the stillness; and now the doctor, losing all patience, drew aside the curtain and looked in. The chamber was empty, and Jekyl was gone! His little portmanteau, and his still smaller carpet-bag, his hat-case, his canes – every article of his *personnel* – were away; and while Grounsell stood cursing the “little rascal,” he himself was pleasantly seated opposite Lady Hester and Kate in the travelling-carriage, and convulsing them with laughter at his admirable imitation of the poor doctor.

Great as was Grounsell’s anger at this trickery, it was still greater when he discovered that he had been locked in. He quite forgot the course of time passed in his meditations, and could not believe it possible that there was sufficient interval to have effected all these arrangements so speedily.

Too indignant to brook delay, he dashed his foot through the door, and passed out. The noise at once summoned the people of the house to the spot, and, to Grounsell’s surprise, the police officer amongst them, who, in all the pomp of office, now barred the passage with a drawn sword.

“What is it? – what’s this?” cried he, in astonishment.

“Effraction by force in case of debt is punishable by the 127th section of the ‘Code,’” said a dirty little man, who, with the air of a shoeblack, was still a leading member of the Florence “Bar.”

“I owe nothing here, – not a farthing, sir; let me pass,” cried Grounsell.

“Fathers for sons of nonage or over that period, domiciliated in the same house,” began the Advocate, reading out of a volume in his hand, “are also responsible.”

“What balderdash, sir! I have no son; I never was married in my life; and as for this Mr. Jekyl, if you mean to father him on me, I’ll resist to the last drop of my blood.”

“Denunciation and menace, with show of arms or without,” began the lawyer again, “are punishable by fine and imprisonment.”

Grounsell was now so worked up by fury that he attempted to force a passage by main strength; but a general brandishing of knives by all the family, from seven years of age upwards, warned him that the attempt might be too serious, while a wild chorus of abusive language arose from various sympathizers who poured in from the street to witness the scene.

A father who would not pay for his own son! an “assassin,” who had no bowels for his kindred; a “Birbante,” a “Briccone,” and a dozen similar epithets, rattled on him like hail, till Grounsell, supposing that the “bite” might be in proportion to the “bark,” retreated into a small chamber, and proposed terms of accommodation. Few men take pleasure in acquitting their own debts, fewer still like to pay those of their neighbors, and Grounsell set about the task in anything but a pleasant manner. There was one redeeming feature, however, in the affair. Jekyl’s schedule could not have extracted a rebuke from the severest Commissioner of Bankruptcy. His household charges were framed on the most moderate scale of expenditure. A few crowns for his house-rent, a few “Pauls” for his eatables, and a few “Grazie” for his washing, comprised the whole charge of his establishment, and not even Hume would have sought to cut down the “estimates.” Doubtless more than one half of the demands were unjust and extortionate, and many were perhaps already acquitted; but as all the rogueries were but homoeopathic iniquities after all, their doses might be endured with patience. His haste to conclude the arrangements had, however, a very opposite tendency. The more yielding he became, the greater grew their exactions, and several times the treaty threatened to open hostilities again; and at last it was full an hour after Jekyl’s departure that Grounsell escaped from durance, and was free to follow George Onslow to Pratolino.

With his adventures in the interval the reader is sufficiently acquainted; and we now come back to that moment where, bewildered and lost, he sat down upon the bench beside the high-road.

CHAPTER II. A SAD HOUSEHOLD

It was already past noon when Grounsell reached Florence. He was delayed at the gate by the authorities examining a peasant's cart in front of him, – a process which appeared to take a most unusual degree of care and scrutiny, – and thus gave the doctor another occasion for inveighing against the “stupid ignorance of foreigners, who throw every possible impediment in the way of traffic and intercourse.”

“What have they discovered now?” cried he, testily, as in a crowd of vehicles, of all sorts and sizes, he was jammed up like a coal-vessel in the river. “Is the peasant a revolutionary general in disguise? or has he got Bibles or British cutlery under the straw of his baroccino?”

“No, Eccellenza.” (Every one in a passion in Italy is styled Eccellenza, as an “anodyne.”) “It's a sick man, and they don't know what to do with him.”

“Is there a duty on ague or nervous fever?” asked he, angrily.

“They suspect he's dead, Eccellenza; and if so, there's no use in bringing him into the city, to bring him out again by and by.”

“And don't they know if a man be dead or alive?”

“Not when he's a foreigner, Illustrissimo; and such is the case here.”

“Ah, very true!” said Grounsell, dryly, as if acquiescing in the truth of the remark. “Let me have a look at him; perhaps I can assist their judgment.” And with this he descended, and made his way through the crowd, who, in all the eagerness of curiosity, thronged around the cart. A peasant's great-coat was drawn over the figure and even the face of the sick man, as he lay at full length on the mat flooring of the baroccino; and on his chest some pious hand had deposited a rosary and a wooden crucifix.

Grounsell hastily drew back the covering, and then clutching an arm of those at either side of him, he uttered a faint cry, for the pale and deathlike features before him were those of George Onslow. The instincts of the doctor, however, soon rose above every other feeling, and his hand seized the wrist and felt for the pulse. Its beatings were slow, labored, and irregular, denoting the brain as the seat of injury. Grounsell, therefore, proceeded to examine the head, which, covered with clogged and matted blood, presented a terrific appearance; yet neither there nor elsewhere was there any trace of injury by fire-arms. The history of discovery was soon told. A shepherd had detected the body as he passed the spot, and, hailing some peasants on their way to Florence, advised their taking charge of it to the city, where they would be surely recompensed. The natural suggestion of Grounsell's mind was that, in making his escape from the gendarmes, Onslow had fallen over a cliff. To convey him home, and get him to bed, if possible, before Sir Stafford should hear of the misfortune, was his first care; and in this he succeeded. It was the time when Sir Stafford usually slept; and Grounsell was able to examine his patient, and satisfy himself that no fatal injury was done, long before the old Baronet awoke.

“Sir Stafford wishes to see you, sir; he asked for you repeatedly to-day,” said Proctor.

“Has he heard – does he know anything of this?” said Grounsell, with a gesture to the bed where George lay.

“Not a word, sir. He was very cheerful all the morning, but wondering where you could have gone, and what Mister George was doing.”

“Now for it, then,” muttered Grounsell to himself, as, with clasped hands and knitted brows, he walked along; his mind suffering the very same anxieties as had oftentimes beset him on the eve of some painful operation in his art.

“Well, Grounsell,” said the old man, with a smile, as he entered, “is it to give me a foretaste of my altered condition that you all desert me to-day? You have never come near me, nor George either, so far as I can learn.”

“We’ve had a busy morning of it, Stafford,” said the doctor, sitting down on the bed, and laying his finger on the pulse. “You are better – much better to-day. Your hand is like itself, and your eye is free from fever.”

“I feel it, Gronnsell, – I feel as if, with some twenty years less upon my back, I could like to begin my tussle with the world, and try issue with the best.”

“You ‘re young enough, and active enough yet, for what is before you, Stafford. Yesterday I told you of everything in colors perhaps gloomier than reality. The papers of to-day are somewhat more cheery in their tidings. The hurricane may pass over, and leave us still afloat; but there is another trial for you, my old friend, and you must take heart to bear it well and manfully.”

Sir Stafford sat up in his bed, and, grasping Grounsell by either shoulder, cried out, “Go on – tell it quickly.”

“Be calm, Stafford; be yourself, my old friend,” said Grounsell, terrified at the degree of emotion he had called up. “Your own courageous spirit will not desert you now.”

“I know it,” said the old man, as, relaxing his grasp, he fell back upon the pillow, and then, turning on his face, he uttered a deep groan. “I know your tidings now,” cried he, in a burst of agony. “Oh, Grounsell, what is all other disgrace compared to this?”

“I am speaking of George – of your son,” interposed Gronnsell, hastily, and seizing with avidity the opportunity to reveal all at once. “He left this for Pratolino this morning to fight a duel, but by some mischance has fallen over a cliff, and is severely injured.”

“He’s dead, – you would tell me he is dead!” said the old man, in a faint, thrilling whisper.

“Far from it Alive, and like to live, but still sorely crushed and wounded.”

“Oh, God!” cried the old man, in a burst of emotion, “what worldliness is in my heart when I am thankful for such tidings as this! When it is a relief to me to know that my child – my only son – lies maimed and broken on a sick-bed, instead of – instead of – ” A gush of tears here broke in upon his utterance, and he wept bitterly.

Grounsell knew too well the relief such paroxysms afford to interfere with their course; while, to avoid any recurrence, even in thought, to the cause, he hurriedly told all that he knew of George’s intended meeting with the Frenchman, and his own share in disturbing the rendezvous.

Sir Stafford never spoke during this recital. The terrible shock seemed to have left its stunning influence on his faculties, and he appeared scarcely able to take in with clearness the details into which the other entered.

“She’s gone to Como, then,” were the first words he uttered, – “to this villa the Prince has lent her?”

“So I understand; and, from what Proctor says, the Russian is going to marry the Dalton girl.”

“Miss Dalton is along with Lady Hester?”

“To be sure; they travel together, and George was to have followed them.”

“Even scandal, Grounsell, can make nothing of this. What say you, man?”

“You may defy it on that score, Stafford. But let us talk of what is more imminent, – of George.”

“I must see him, Grounsell; I must see my poor boy,” said he, rising, and making an effort to get out of bed; but weakness and mental excitement together overcame him, and he sank back again, fainting and exhausted. To this a deep, heavy sleep succeeded, and Grounsell stole away, relieved in mind by having acquitted himself of his painful task, and free to address his thoughts to other cares.

“Lord Norwood wishes to see you, sir,” said a servant to the doctor, as he at last seated himself for a moment’s rest in his chamber; and before Grounsell could reply, the noble Viscount entered.

“Excuse this abrupt visit, sir; but I have just heard of poor Onslow’s accident Is there any danger in his condition?”

“Great and imminent danger, my Lord.”

“By Jove! – sorry for it you don’t happen to know how it occurred?”

“A fall, evidently, was the cause; but how incurred, I cannot even guess.”

“In the event of his coming about again, when might we expect to see him all right, – speaking loosely, of course?”

“Should he recover, it will take a month, or, perhaps, two, before he convalesces.”

“The devil it will! These Frenchmen can’t be made to understand the thing at all; and as Guilnard received a gross personal outrage, he is perfectly out of his mind at the delay in obtaining satisfaction. What is to be done?”

“I am a poor adviser in such cases, my Lord; nor do I see that the matter demands any attention from us whatever.”

“Not from *you*, perhaps,” said Norwood, insolently; “but I had the misfortune to go out as his friend! My position is a most painful and critical one.”

“I should suppose that no one will understand how to deal with such embarrassments better than your Lordship.”

“Thanks for the good opinion; the speech I take to be a compliment, however you meant it. I believe I am not altogether unskilled in such affairs, and it is precisely because such is the case that I am here now. Onslow, in other hands than mine, is a ruined man. The story, tell it how you will, comes to this: that, having gone out to meet a man he had grossly insulted, he wanders away from the rendezvous, and is found some hours after at the foot of the cliff, insensible. He may have fallen, he may have been waylaid, – though everything controverts this notion; or, lastly, he may have done the act himself. There will be advocates for each view of the case; but it is essential, for his honor and reputation, that one story should be authenticated. Now, I am quite ready to stand godfather to such a version, taking all the consequences, however serious, on myself.”

“This is very kind, very generous, indeed, my Lord,” said Grounsell, suddenly warming into an admiration of one he was always prejudiced against.

“Oh, I’m a regular John Bull!” said the Viscount, at once assuming the burden of that canticle, which helped him in all moments of hypocrisy. “Always stand by the old stock, – nothing like them, sir. The Anglo-Saxon blood will carry all before it yet; never suffer a rascally foreigner to put his foot on one of your countrymen. Have him out, sir; parade the fellow at once: that’s my plan.”

“I like your spirit!” cried Grounsell, enthusiastically.

“To be sure you do, old cock!” exclaimed Norwood, clapping him familiarly on the shoulder. “Depend upon it, I’ll pull George through this. I’ll manage the matter cleverly. There must be no mistake about it; no room for doubt or equivocation, you know. All straightforward, open, and manly: John Bull every inch of it. That’s *my* notion, at least, – I hope it’s yours?”

“Perfectly, – thoroughly so!”

“Well, then, just hand that note to Sir Stafford.” Here he placed a sealed letter in Grounsell’s hand. “Tell him what I’ve just told you. Let him fairly understand the whole question, and let me have the contents this evening at the *café* in the Santa Trinita, – say about nine o’clock; not later than that. These fellows always gather about that hour.”

“I’ll take care of it,” said Grounsell.

“All right!” cried Norwood, gayly, as he arose and adjusted the curls beneath his hat. “My compliments to the old gent, and tell George not to make himself uneasy. He’s in safe hands. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye, my Lord, good-bye,” said Grounsell, who, as he looked after him, felt, as it were, unconsciously recurring to all his former prejudices and dislikes of the noble Viscount. “Those fellows,” muttered he, “are as inexplicable to me as a new malady, of which I neither know the stages nor the symptoms. The signs I take for those of health may be precisely the indications of corruption; and what I deem unsound may turn out to be exactly the opposite.” And so he fell into a musing fit, in which certainly his estimate of Lord Norwood continued steadily to fall lower and lower the longer he thought of him. “He must be a rogue! – he must be a scoundrel! Nature makes all its blackguards plausible, just as poison-berries are always brilliant to look at. They are both intended to

be the correctives of rash impressions, and I was only a fool ever to be deceived by him. Out of this, at all hazards, – that’s the first thing!” muttered Grounsell to himself, as he walked hastily up and down the room. “The place is like a plague district, and we must not carry an infected rag away from it! Glorious Italy, forsooth! There’s more true enlightenment, there’s a higher purpose, and a nobler view of life in the humblest English village, than in the proudest halls of their Eternal City!”

In such pleasant reflections on national character he entered Sir Stafford’s room, and found his friend seated at a table covered with newly arrived letters; the seals were all unbroken, and the sick man was turning them over, and gazing at the different handwritings with a sad and listless apathy.

“I ‘m glad you ‘ve come, Grounsell. I have not courage for this,” said he, pointing to the mass of letters before him.

“Begging impostors, one half of them, I ‘ll be sworn!” said Grounsell, seating himself to the work. “Was I not right? Here’s a Cabinet Minister suing for your vote on an Irish question, and entreating your speedy return to England, ‘where, he trusts, the object you are both interested in may be satisfactorily arranged.’ Evasive rascal! Could n’t he say, ‘you shall have the Peerage for your support’? Would n’t it be more frank and more intelligible to declare, ‘We take you at your price’? These,” said he, throwing half a dozen contemptuously from him, “are all from your constituents. The ‘independent borough’ contains seventy electors; and if you owned the patronage of the two services, with a fair share of the public offices and India, you could n’t content them. I ‘d tell them fairly, ‘I have bought you already; the article is paid for and sent home. Let us hear no more about it!’ This is more cheering. Shoenhals, of Riga, stands firm, and the Rotterdam house will weather the gale. That’s good news, Onslow!” said he, grasping the old man’s hand. “This is from Calcutta. Prospects are brightening a little in that quarter, too. Come, come, – there’s some blue in the sky. Who knows what good weather ‘s in store for us?”

Onslow’s lip trembled, and he passed his hand over his eyes without speaking.

“This is from Como,” said Grounsell, half angrily, tossing away a highly perfumed little three-cornered note.

“Give it to me, – let me see it,” said Onslow, eagerly; while with trembling fingers he adjusted his spectacles to read. Grounsell handed him the epistle, and walked to the window.

“She’s quite well,” read Sir Stafford, aloud; “they had delightful weather on the road, and found Como in full beauty on their arrival.” Grounsell grumbled some angry mutterings between his teeth, and shrugged up his shoulders disdainfully. “She inquires most kindly after me, and wishes me to join them there, for Kate Dalton’s betrothal.”

“Yet she never took the trouble to visit you when living under the same roof!” cried Grounsell, indignantly.

The old man laid down the letter, and seemed to ponder for some moments.

“What’s the amount? – how much is the sum?” asked Grounsell, bluntly.

“The amount! – the sum! – of what?” inquired Sir Stafford.

“I ask, what demand is she making, that it is prefaced thus?”

“By Heaven! if you were not a friend of more than fifty years’ standing, you should never address me as such again,” cried Onslow, passionately. “Has ill-nature so absorbed your faculties that you have not a good thought or good feeling left you?”

“My stock of them decreases every day, – ay, every hour, Onslow,” said he, with a deeper emotion than he had yet displayed. “It is, indeed, a sorry compromise, that if age is to make us wiser, it should make us less amiable, also!”

“You are not angry with me? – not offended, Grounsell?” said Onslow, grasping his hand in both his own.

“Not a bit of it But, as to temperament, *I* can no more help *my* distrust, than *you* can conquer *your* credulity, which is a happier philosophy, after all.”

“Then come, read that letter, Grounsell,” said Onslow, smiling pleasantly. “Put your prejudices aside for once, and be just, if not generous.”

Grounsell took the note, and walked to the window to read it. The note was just what he expected, – a prettily turned inquiry after her husband’s health, interwoven with various little pleasantries of travelling, incidents of the road, and so forth. The invitation was a mere suggestion, and Grounsell was half angry at how little there was to find fault with; for, even to the “Very sincerely yours, Hester Onslow,” all was as commonplace as need be. Accidentally turning over the page, however, he found a small slip of silver paper, – a bank check for five hundred pounds, only wanting Onslow’s signature. Grounsell crushed it convulsively in his palm, and handed the note back to Onslow, without a word.

“Well, are you convinced? – are you satisfied now?” asked Onslow, triumphantly.

“I am perfectly so!” said Grounsell, with a deep sigh. “You must write, and tell her that business requires your immediate presence in England, and that George’s condition will necessitate a return by sea. Caution her that the Daltons should be consulted about this marriage, which, so far as I know, they have not been; and I would advise, also, seeing that there may be some interval before you can write again, that you should send her a check, – say for five hundred pounds.”

“So you *can* be equitable, – Grounsell,” cried the other, joyously.

“And here is a letter from Lord Norwood,” said Grounsell, not heeding the remark, and breaking the seal as he spoke. “Laconic, certainly. ‘Let me have the enclosed by this evening. – N.’ The enclosed are five acceptances for two hundred each; the ‘value received’ being his Lordship’s services in upholding your son’s honor. Now here, at least, Onslow, I’ll have my own way.” And, with these words, he seated himself at a table and wrote: —

My Lord, – Living in a land where assassination is cheap, and even men of small fortune can keep a Bravo, I beg to return your Lordship’s bills, without submitting them to my friend for endorsement, your price being considerably above the tariff of the country, and more calculated to your own exigencies than the occasion which it was meant to remunerate. I am, yours,

Paul Grounsell.

“What have you said there, Grounsell? you look so self-satisfied, it can scarcely be over-civil.”

“There, – ‘To the Viscount Norwood’” said Grounsell, as he sealed and addressed the note. “We are getting through our work rapidly. In a week, or even less, if George’s symptoms show nothing worse, we shall get away from this; and even on the sea one feels half as though it were England.”

We need not follow Grounsell through the busy days which ensued, nor track him in his various negotiations with tradespeople, bankers, house-agents, and that legionary class which are called “commissionaires.” Enough if we say that, in arranging for the departure of his friends, his impressions of Italian roguery received many an additional confirmation; and that, when the last day of their sojourn arrived, his firm conviction was that none but a millionaire could afford to live in this the very cheapest capital of Europe!

And now they are gone! steaming calmly away across the Gulf of Genoa. They have closed the little episode of their life in Italy, and with heavy hearts are turning homeward. The great Mazzarini Palace looks sad and forlorn; nor do we mean to linger much longer on a scene whence the actors have departed.

CHAPTER III. A LAST SCENE

One last glance at the Mazzarini Palace, and we leave it forever

Seated in the drawing-room where Lady Hester once held sway, in the very chair around which swarmed her devoted courtiers and admirers, Mrs. Ricketts now reclined, pretty much on the same terms, and with probably some of the same sentiments, as Louis Blanc or his friend Albert might have experienced on finding themselves domesticated within the Palace of the Luxembourg. They were, so to say, parallel circumstances. There had been a great reverse of fortune, an abdication, and a flight. The sycophants of the day before were the masters now, and none disputed the pretensions of any bold enough to assume dictation. To be sure, Mrs. Ricketts's rule, like Ledru Rollings, was but a provisional government; for already the bills for an approaching sale of everything were posted over the front of the palace, and Racca Morlache's people were cataloguing every article with a searching accuracy, very tormenting to the beholders.

From some confused impression that they were friends of Lady Hester, and that Mrs. Ricketts's health was in a precarious condition, Sir Stafford gave orders that they should not be molested in any way, but permitted to prolong their stay to the latest period compatible with the arrangement for sale. A sense of gratitude, too, mingled with these feelings; for Mrs. Ricketts had never ceased to indite euphuistic notes of inquiry after George himself, – send presents of impracticable compounds of paste and preserves, together with bottles of mixtures, lotions, embrocations, and liniments, one tithe of which would have invalidated a regiment Gronnsell, it is true, received these civilities in a most unworthy spirit; called her “an old humbug,” with a very unpolite expletive annexed to it; and all but hurled the pharmacopoeia at the head of the messenger. Still, he had other cares too pressing to suffer his mind to dwell on such trifles; and when Onslow expressed a wish that the family should not be disturbed in their occupancy, he merely muttered, “Let them stay and be d – d;” and thought no more of them.

Now, although the palace was, so to speak, dismantled, the servants discharged, the horses sent to livery for sale, the mere residence was convenient for Mrs. Ricketts. It afforded a favorable opportunity for a general “doing up of the Villino Zoe,” – a moment for which all her late ingenuity had not been able to provide. It opened a convenient occasion, too, for supplying her own garden with a very choice collection of flowers from the Mazzarini, – fuchsias, geraniums, and orchidae, being far beyond all the inventorial science of Morlache's men; and lastly, it conferred the pleasing honor of dating all her despatches to her hundred correspondents from the Palazzo Mazzarini, where, to oblige her dear Lady Hester, she was still lingering, – “*Se sacrificando*” as she delighted to express it, “*Jai doveri dell' amicizia*.” To these cares she had now vowed herself a martyr. The General believed in her sorrows; Martha would have sworn to them; and not a whit the less sincerely that she spent hours in secreting tulip roots and hyacinths, while a deeper scheme was in perpetration, – no less than to substitute a copy of a Gerard Dow for the original, and thus transmit the genius of the Ricketts family to a late posterity. Poor Martha would have assisted in a murder at her bidding, and not had a suspicion of its being a crime!

It was an evening “at home to her few most intimate friends,” when Mrs. Ricketts, using the privilege of an invalid, descended to the drawing-room in a costume which united an ingenious compromise between the habit of waking and sleeping. A short tunic, a kind of female monkey-jacket, of faded yellow satin edged with swansdown, and a cap of the same material, whose shape was borrowed from that worn by the beef-eaters, formed the upper portion of a dress to which wide fur boots, with gold tassels, and a great hanging pocket, like a sabretasche, gave a false air of a military

costume. "It was singular," she would remark, with a bland smile, "but very becoming!" Besides, it suited every clime. She used to come down to breakfast in it at Windsor Castle. "The Queen liked it;" the Bey of Tripoli loved it; and the Hospodar of Wallachia had one made for himself exactly from the pattern. Her guests were the same party we have already introduced to our reader in the Villino Zoe, – Haggerstone, the Pole, and Foglass being the privileged few admitted into her august presence, and who came to make up her whist-table, and offer their respectful homage on her convalescence.

The Carnival was just over, the dull season of Lent had begun, and the Rickettses' tea-table was a resource when nothing else offered. Such was the argument of Haggerstone as he took a cheap dinner with Foglass at the Luna.

"She 's an infernal bore, sir, – that I know fully as well as you can inform me; but please to tell me who is n't a bore." Then he added, in a lower voice, "Certainly it ain't *you*!"

"Yes, yes, – I agree with you," said Foglass; "she has reason to be sore about the Onslows' treatment."

"I said a bore, sir, – not sore," screamed out Haggerstone.

"Ha!" replied the other, not understanding the correction. "I remember one day, when Townsend – "

"D – n Townsend!" said Haggerstone.

"No, not Dan, – Tom Townsend. That fellow who was always with Mathews."

"Walk a little quicker, and you may talk as much balderdash as you please," said the other, buttoning up his coat, and resolving not to pay the slightest attention to his companion's agreeability.

"Who is here?" asked Haggerstone, as he followed the servant up the stairs.

"Nobody but Count Petrolaffsky, sir."

"Un Comte à bon compte," muttered Haggerstone to himself, always pleased when he could be sarcastic, even in soliloquy. "They 'll find it no easy matter to get a tenant for this house nowadays. Florence is going down, sir, and will soon be little better than Boulogne-sur-Mer."

"Very pleasant, indeed, for a month in summer," responded Foglass, who had only caught up the last word. "Do you think of going there?"

"Going there!" shouted out the other, in a voice that made misconception impossible. "About as soon as I should take lodgings in Wapping for country air!"

This speech brought them to the door of the drawing-room, into which Haggerstone now entered, with that peculiar step which struck him as combining the jaunty slide of a man of fashion with the martial tread of an old soldier.

"Ha! my old adherents, – all my faithful ones!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, giving a hand to each to kiss; and then, in a voice of deep emotion, she said, "Bless you both! May peace and happiness be beneath your roof-trees! joy sit beside your hearth!"

Haggerstone reddened a little; for, however alive to the ludicrous in his neighbors, he was marvellously sensitive as to having a part in the piece himself.

"You are looking quite yourself again," said he, bluntly.

"The soul, indeed, is unchanged; the spirit – "

"What's become of Purvis?" broke in Haggerstone, who never gave any quarter to these poetic flights.

"You 'll see him presently. He has been so much fatigued and exhausted by this horrid police investigation, that he never gets up till late. I 've put him on a course of dandelion and aconite, too; the first effect of which is always unpleasant."

Leaving Foglass in conclave with the hostess, Haggerstone now approached the Count, who had for several times performed his toilet operation of running his hands through his hair, in expectation of being addressed.

"How d'ye do, – any piquet lately?" asked the Colonel, half cavalierly.

"As if I was tinkling of piquet, wid my country in shains! How you can aske me dat?"

“What did you do with Norwood t’other night?” resumed the other, in a voice somewhat lower.

“Won four hundred and fifty, – but he no pay!”

“Nor ever will.”

“What you say? – not pay me what I wins!”

“Not a sou of it.”

“And dis you call English nobleman, – pair d’Angleterre!”

“Hush! Don’t be carried away by your feelings. Some men Norwood won’t pay because he does n’t know them. There are others he treats the same way because he *does* know them, – very equitable, eh?”

The observation seemed more intelligible to the Pole than polite, for he bit his lip and was silent, while Haggerstone went on, —

“He ‘s gone, and that, at least, is a point gained; and now that these Onslows have left this, and that cur Jekyl, we may expect a little quietness, for a while, at least; but here comes Purvis.” And that worthy individual was led in on Martha’s arm, a large green shade over his eyes, and his face plentifully sprinkled with flour.

“What’s the matter with you, man? you ‘re ‘got up’ like a ghost in a melodrama.”

“They ‘ve taken all the cuti-cuti-cuti – ”

“Call it skin, sir, and go on.”

“Sk-skin off my face with a lin-liniment,” cried he, “and I could sc-scream out with pain whenever I speak!”

“Balm of marigolds, with the essential oil of crab-apple,” said Martha. “I made it myself.”

“I wish to Hea-Heaven you had tr-tried it, too,” whispered he.

“Brother Scroope, you are ungrateful,” said Mrs. Ricketts, with the air of a Judge, charging. “The vicissitudes of temperature, here, require the use of astringents. The excessive heat of that police-court – ”

“By the way, how has that affair ended?” asked Haggerstone.

“I’ll tell you,” screamed out Purvis, in a burst of eagerness. “They ‘ve fi-fi-fined me a hundred and f-f-fifty scadi for being w-where I never was, and fighting somebody I n-never saw.”

“You got off cheaply, sir. I ‘ve known’ a man sentenced to the galleys for less; and with a better character to boot,” muttered he to himself.

“Lord Norwood and the rest said that I was a pr-pr-principal, and he swore that he found me hiding in a cave.”

“And did he so?”

“Yes; but it was only out of curi-curi-curi – ”

“Curiosity, sir, like other luxuries, must be paid for; and, as you seem a glutton, your appetite may be expensive to you.”

“The mystery remains unsolved as to young Onslow, Colonel?” said Mrs. Ricketts, half in question.

“I believe not, madam. The explanation is very simple. The gallant guardsman, having heard of Guilnard’s skill, preferred being reported ‘missing’ to ‘killed,’ having previously arranged with Norwood to take his place. The price was, I fancy, a smart one, – some say five thousand, some call it ten. Whatever the amount, it has not been paid, and Norwood is furious.”

“But the accident?”

“As for that, madam, nothing more natural than to crack your skull when you lose your head.” And Haggerstone drew himself up with the proud consciousness of his own smartness.

“Then of course the poor young man is ruined?” observed Martha.

“I should say so, madam, – utterly ruined. He may figure on the committee of a Polish ball, but any other society would of course reject him.” This was said to obtain a sneer at Petrolaffsky, without his being able to guess why. “I believe I may say, without much fear of contradiction, that

these Onslows were all humbugs! The old banker's wealth, my lady's refinement, the guardsman's spirit, were all in the same category, – downright humbugs!"

"How he hates us, – how he detests the aristocracy!" said Mrs. Ricketts, in a whisper to the Pole.

"And de Dalton – what of her? – is she millionaire?" asked Petrolaffsky.

"The father a small shopkeeper in Baden, sir; children's toys, nut-crackers, and paper-knives being the staple of his riches. Foglass can tell you all about it. He wants to hear about those Daltons," screamed he into the deaf man's ear.

"Poor as Job – has n't sixpence – lives 'three-pair back,' and dines for a 'zwanziger.' Lame daughter makes something by cutting heads for canes and umbrellas. He picks up a trifle about the hotels."

"Ach Gott! and I was so near be in loaf wid de sister!" muttered the Pole.

"She is likely to d-d-do better, Count," cackled in Purvis. "She caught her Tartar – ha, ha, ha!"

"Midchekoff doesn't mean marriage, sir, depend upon it," said Haggerstone.

"Martha, leave the room, my dear," said Mrs. Ricketts, bridling. "He could no more relish a pleasure without a vice than he could dine without caviare."

"But they are be-be-betrothed," cried Purvis. "I saw a letter with an account of the ceremony. Midchekoff fitted up a beautiful chapel at his villa, and there was a Greek priest came sp-e-cial from M-M-M-Moscow –"

"I thought you were going to say from the moon, sir; and it would be almost as plausible," croaked Haggerstone.

"I saw the letter. It was n't shown to me, but I saw it; and it was that woman from Breslau gave her away."

"What! old Madame Heidendorf? She has assisted at a great many similar ceremonies before, sir."

"It was the Emperor sent her on purpose," cried Purvis, very angry at the disparagement of his history.

"In this unbelieving age, sir, I must say that your fresh innocence is charming; but permit me to tell you that I know old Caroline Meersburg, – she was sister of the fellow that stole the Archduke Michael's dress-sword at the Court ball given for his birthday. I have known her five-and-thirty years. You must have met her, madam, at Lubetskoy's, when he was minister at Naples, the year after the battle of Marengo."

"I was wearing trousers with frills to them, and hunting butterflies at that time," said Mrs. Ricketts, with a great effort at a smile.

"I have n't a doubt of it, madam." And then muttered to himself, "And if childishness mean youth, she will enjoy a perpetual spring!"

"The ceremony," resumed Purvis, very eager to relate his story, "was dr-droll enough; they cut off a – a – a lock of her hair and tied it up with one of his."

"A good wig spoiled!" croaked Haggerstone.

"They then brought a b-b-b –"

"A baby, sir?"

"No, not a b-baby, a b-basin – a silver basin – and they poured water over both their hands."

"A ceremony by no means in accordance with Russian prejudices," chimed in Haggerstone. "They know far more of train-oil and bears' fat than of brown Windsor!"

"Not the higher nobility, Colonel, – not the people of rank," objected Mrs. Ricketts.

"There are none such, madam. I have lived in intimacy with them all, from Alexander downwards. You may dress them how you please, but the Cossack is in the blood. Raw beef and red breeches are more than instincts with them; and, except the Poles, they are the dirtiest nation of Europe."

"What you say of Polen?" asked Petrolaffsky.

“That if oil could smooth down the acrimony of politics, you ought to be a happy people yet, sir.”

“And we are a great people dis minet. Haven’t we Urednfrskioetsch, de best general in de world; and Krakouventkay, de greatest poet; and Vladoritski, de most distinguish pianist?”

“Keep them, sir, with all their consonants; and Heaven give you luck with them,” said Haggerstone, turning away.

“On Tuesday – no, We-Wednesday next, they are to set out for St. P-P-Petersburg. And when the Emperor’s leave is gr-granted, then Midchekoff is to follow; but not before.”

“An de tyrant no grant de leave,” said the Pole, gnashing his teeth and grasping an imaginary dagger in his wrath. “More like he send her to work in shains, wid my beautiful sisters and my faders.”

“He’ll have more important matters to think of soon, sir,” said Haggerstone, authoritatively. “Europe is on the eve of a great convulsion. Some kings and kaisers will accept the Chiltern Hundreds before the year’s out.”

“Shall we be safe, Colonel, here? Ought Martha and I – ”

“Have no fears, madam; age commands respect, even from Huns and Croats. And were it otherwise, madam, where would you fly to? France will have her own troubles, England has the income-tax, and Germany will rake up some old grievance of the Hohenstaufen, or the Emperor Conrad, and make it a charge against Prince Metternich and the Diet! It’s a very rascally world altogether, and out of Tattersall’s yard I never expect to hear of honesty or good principles; and, *à propos* to nothing, let us have some piquet, Count.”

The table was soon got ready, and the players had just seated themselves, when the sound of carriage-wheels in the court attracted their attention.

“What can it mean, Scroope? Are you quite certain that you said I wouldn’t receive to-night?”

“Yes; I told them what you b-bade me; that if the Archduke called – ”

“There, you need n’t repeat it,” broke in Mrs. Ricketts, for certain indications around Haggerstone’s mouth showed the sense of ridicule that was working within him.

“I suppose, madam, you feel somewhat like poor Pauline, when she said that she was so beset with kings and kaisers she had never a moment left for good society?”

“You must say positively, Scroope, that I admit no one this evening.”

“The Signor Morlache wishes to see you, madam,” said a servant. And close behind him, as he spoke, followed that bland personage, bowing gracefully to each as he entered.

“Sorry – most sorry – madam, to intrude upon your presence; but the Prince Midchekoff desires to have a glance at the pictures and decorations before he goes away from Florence.”

“Will you mention to him that to-morrow, in the afternoon, about five or – ”

“He leaves this to-morrow morning, madam; and if you could – ”

But before the Jew could finish his request the door was flung wide, and the great Midchekoff entered, with his hands in his coat-pockets, and his glass in one eye. He sauntered into the room with a most profound unconsciousness that there were people in it. Not a glance did he even bestow on the living figures of the scene, nor did a trait of his manner evince any knowledge of their presence. Ranging his eyes over the walls and the ceilings, he neither noticed the martial attitude of Haggerstone, nor the graceful undulations by which Mrs. Ricketts was, as it were, rehearsing a courtesy before him.

“Originals, but all poor things, Morlache,” said the Prince. And really the observation seemed as though uttered of the company rather than the pictures.

“Mrs. Ricketts has been good enough, your Highness – ” began the Jew.

“Give her a Napoleon,” said he, listlessly, and turned away.

“My sister, Mrs. Ricketts – Mrs. M-M-Montague Ricketts,” began Scroope, whose habitual timidity gave way under the extremity of provocation. And the Prince turned slowly round, and surveyed the speaker and the imposing form that loomed behind him.

“Tell them that I don’t mean to keep any establishment here, Morlache.” And with this he strolled on, and passed into another room, while, like as in a tableau, the others stood speechless with rage and indignation.

“He took you for the housekeeper, ma’am,” said Haggerstone, standing up with his back to the fire – “and a housekeeper out of place!”

“Martha, where’s the General? Where is he, I say?” cried Mrs. Ricketts, furious with passion.

“He went to bed at nine,” whispered Martha. “He thought, by rising early to-morrow, to finish the attack on Utrecht before night.”

“You are as great a fool as himself. Scroope, come here. You must follow that Russian. You must tell him the gross rudeness – ”

“I’ll be ha-ha-hanged if I do. I’ve had enough of rows, for one winter at least. I’ll not get into another sc-scrape, if I can help it.”

“I’m sorry, madam, that I cannot offer you my services,” said Haggerstone, “but I never meddle in a quarrel which can be made a subject of ridicule. Mr. Foglass, I’m certain, has no such scruple.”

“The Prince appears a very agreeable man,” said the ex-Consul, who, not having the slightest notion of what was passing, merely followed his instincts of praising the person of high rank.

“De shains of my enslaved country is on my hands. I’m tied like one galérien!” said Petrolaffsky, in a voice guttural with emotion.

“Your pardon once more, madam,” said Morlache, slipping into the chamber, and noiselessly approaching Mrs. Ricketts’s chair. “The Prince will take everything, – pictures, plate, china, and books. I hope to-morrow, at noon, will not inconvenience you to leave this – ”

“To-morrow! Impossible, sir. Perfectly impossible.”

“In that case, madam, we must make some arrangement as to rent. His Highness leaves all to me, and I will endeavor to meet your wishes in every respect. Shall we say two thousand francs a month for the present?” Without waiting for any reply, he turned to the Pole, and whispered, “He’ll take you back again. He wants a chasseur, to send to St. Petersburg. Come over to me in the morning, about ten. Mr. Foglass,” cried he, in a loud voice, “when you write to London, will you mention that the varnish on the Prince’s drosky doesn’t stand the cold of Russia, and that they must try some other plan with the barouche? Your brother is an ingenious fellow, and he’ll hit upon something. Colonel Haggerstone, the Prince did n’t return your call. He says you will guess the reason when he says that he was in Palermo in a certain year you know of. I wish the honorable company good-night,” said he, bowing with a deference almost submissive, and backing out of the room as he spoke.

And with him we also take our leave of them. They were like the chance passengers we meet on the road of a journey, with whom we converse when near, and forget when we separate from. Were we not more interested for the actors than the scenes on which they “strut their hour,” we might yet linger a few moments on the spot so bound up with our memory of Kate Dalton, – the terrace where she sat, the little orangery where she loitered of a morning, the window where she read, and dreamed of that bright future, so much nearer to her grasp than she knew of! There they were all! – destined to feel new influences and know other footsteps, for she had left them forever, and gone forth upon her “Path” in life.

CHAPTER IV. A PACKAGE OF LETTERS

It was a bright clear morning in May. A somewhat late spring had retarded vegetation, and the blossoming fruit-trees now added their gorgeous beauty to the warmer tints of coming summer. We are once more in Baden; but how different is it from what we saw it last. The frozen fountains now splash, and hiss, and sparkle in the sun. The trim alleys are flanked by the yellow crocus and the daffodil; the spray-like foliage of the ash is flecking the sunlight on the merry river, along whose banks the cheering sound of pleasant voices mingles with the carol of a thousand birds. The windows are open, and gay balconies are spreading, and orange-trees unfolding their sweetness to the breezy air. All is life and motion and joy, for the winter is past, and nothing remains of it save the snow-peaks on some distant mountains, and even they are glowing in brilliant contrast with the deep blue sky beyond them.

Lovely as the valley is in summer or autumn, it is only in spring its perfect beauty appears. The sudden burst of vegetation – the rapid transition from the frost-bound durance of winter to the life and lightness of the young season, have a most exciting and exhilarating effect. This seemed conspicuous enough in the inhabitants as they chatted merrily in the streets, or met each other with pleasant greetings. It was the hour of the post arriving, and around the little window of the office were gathered the chief celebrities of the village, – the principal hotel-keepers, curious to learn what tidings their correspondents gave of the prospects of the coming summer. Everything appeared to smile on that happy moment, for as the various letters were opened, each had some good news to tell his neighbors, – now of some great English Lord, now of some Hungarian magnate or Russian Prince that was to make Baden his residence for the summer. “The Cour de Bade is all taken,” said one; “There will not be a room free in all the Adler;” “The Swan must refuse the Queen of Naples,” – such were the rumors that fell from lip to lip as in hearty congratulation they talked over their good fortune.

One figure only of the assembled group seemed excepted from the general Joy. He was a large elderly man, who, in a patched and threadbare surtout, with a coarse scarlet muffler round his throat, appeared either distrustful of the mild season or unprovided with any change of costume to enjoy it. Seated on a stone bench in front of the window of the post-office, with an arm on each knee, and his head bent heavily forward, he never seemed to notice what went forward, nor hear one syllable of the joyous recognitions about him.

The crowd at last dispersed, the happy recipients of good news were turning homewards, and only one or two still lingered around the spot, when the old man arose and approached the window. There was something almost of shame in the way he slouched his hat over his eyes as he drew nigh and knocked timidly at the closed pane.

His summons was unheard, and yet for some time he did not repeat it, – perhaps he loved better to feed his hope even these short few moments than again fall back into the dark gloom of his despair! At last, and with a deep, hollow sigh, he tapped again.

“Have you anything for the name of Dalton, – Peter Dalton?” asked he, in a voice wherein scarcely an accent revealed the once high-hearted nature.

“Nothing,” was the curt rejoinder. And the window was slammed to with impatience.

He grasped the iron railing with a convulsive grip, as though a sudden pang had shot through him, and then, by a great effort, he drew himself up to his full height; his pale and haggard face grew paler as he turned it upwards, and his bloodless lips trembled as they muttered some indistinct syllables; then turning about, he brushed abruptly past the few who stood around, and walked away.

He had not gone many paces when a boy overtook him, saying, “Come back, sir; the postmaster has two letters for you.”

Dalton looked stealthily at either side, to be sure that the speech was addressed to him, and, with a fierceness that startled the boy, said, “You’re certain they’re for me?”

“Yes, yes; all right, – here they are,” cried the postmaster from the window. “One, a soldier’s letter from Munich, and free. The other is a heavier packet, and costs four florins and twelve kreutzers.”

“I must be satisfied with this one, then,” said Dalton, “till I go back for money. I brought no change out with me.”

“No matter: you can send it,” said the other.

“Maybe it’s not so easy as you think,” muttered Dalton to himself; while he added, aloud, “Very well, I’ll do so, and thank you.” And he clutched the two letters, and pressed them to his bosom.

With hurried steps he now paced homewards, but, stopping at every instant, he drew forth the packets to gaze at them, and be certain that no self-deception was over him, and that his possession was real and tangible. His gait grew more firm, as he went, and his tread, as he mounted the stairs, sounded assured and steady.

“You have a letter, father dearest,” cried Nelly, as she flung wide the door. “I saw you crossing the Platz, and I know, from your walk, that you’ve got one.”

“No, but better, Nelly – I ‘ve two. That’s from Frank; and here’s Kate’s, and a bulky one – four florins twelve – devil a less.”

“Oh, give it to me! Let me hear of her – let me feel beside her once again!” cried Nelly. And with bursting eagerness she tore open the envelope, from which two or three sealed notes fell out. “This is from Lady ‘Hester,” said she; “and this a hand I do not know, but addressed to you; and here are bills or money-orders for a large sum. What can all this mean?”

“Can’t you read what she says?” said Dalton, reddening, and suddenly remembering that Nelly was not aware of his having written to Kate. “Give it to me; I ‘ll read it myself.” And he snatched the letter from her fingers. “There’s Frank’s for you.”

“Oh, father, father!” cried Nelly, in a burst of grief, as she tore open Lady Hester’s letter; “it is as I feared. Kate is about to be married – if she be not already married.”

“Without my leave – without asking my consent!” cried Dalton, passionately. “Am I nobody at all? Am I the head of the family, or am I not? Is this the way to treat her father? May I never see light, if I won’t have him ‘out,’ if he was a Prince of the Blood! Oh, the ungrateful girl! Leave off crying there, and tell me all about it. Read me her own letter, I say – if God will give me patience to listen to it.”

With a bosom almost bursting, and a lip quivering with emotion, Ellen began, —

“La Rocca, Lake of Como.

Dearest Father and Sister, – Oh that I could throw myself at your feet, and pour out all that my heart is full of – tell you what I feel and hope and fear, and ask your counsel and your blessing. I know not if the last few days be real; my poor head is turning amid the scenes I ‘ve passed through and the emotions I have felt. I had no friend but Lady Hester – no adviser but she! She has been a mother to me – not as you would have been, Nelly – not to warn and restrain, when perhaps both were needed, but to encourage and feed my hopes. I yielded to her counsels – ”

“I don’t understand one word of this,” cried Dalton, impatiently. “What did she do?”

Nelly’s eyes ran rapidly over the lines without speaking; and then, in a low but distinct voice, she said, —

“It is as I said; she is betrothed to this great Russian Prince.”

“That fellow, they say, owns half Moscow. Fogles told us about him.”

“Prince Midchekoff.”

“That’s the name. Well, it’s a fine match, – there’s no denying it. How did it come about? and why didn’t he come here and ask my consent? What’s the meaning of doing it all in this hurry?”

“The marriage can only take place in St. Petersburg, and in presence of the Emperor; and she is merely betrothed, at present, to enable her to accompany the lady, Madame de Heidendorf, to Russia, where the Prince will follow in a few weeks.”

“That bangs Banagher! Why could n’t they get a priest where they are? Be gorra! they ‘ve scruples about everything but *me!* I ‘m the only one that’s not considered! What the devil is the Emperor to her, – sure *he* is n’t her father? Well, well, go on.”

“She would seem to have yielded to persuasion,” said Nelly, feelingly. “The Prince, with all his greatness, appears not to have won her heart. See how she dwells upon his immense wealth and the splendor of his position.”

“Let us hear about that,” cried Dalton, eagerly.

“My heart is nigh to bursting when I think of you and dearest Nelly living with me, in all the enjoyment that riches can bestow, nothing denied you that you can fancy, and free to indulge every taste and every wish. To know that I can at last repay, in some sort, all your affection – that poor worthless Kate can minister to your pleasure and your comfort – would make me dare a rasher destiny than this. And he is so generous, Nelly. The whole of yesterday is like a page from the ‘Arabian Nights,’ as I sat surrounded with gorgeous articles of gold and gems – diamonds such as a queen might wear, and rubies larger than the glass-drops I used to deck my hair with long ago! And yet they tell me I have seen nothing as yet, and that the treasures of Vladovitch Palace I hear of at every moment are greater than most royal houses. Lady Hester is kinder than ever, and the Heidendorf also; but she is cold and reserved – too stately for my taste – and I cannot overcome my awe of her. Is not this like a confession of my unfitness for the station I am to occupy? – are not these signs of inferiority? How little Hans would stare at the objects of taste and art by which I am surrounded and of which I never tire in admiring! “There have been great changes in this family since I wrote, and some mysterious circumstance is now hanging over them; but Lady Hester has not told me anything, nor do I care to repeat rumors which reach me through others. I only know that Sir Stafford is about to proceed to England as soon as Captain Onslow’s health will permit; he, poor fellow, met with an accident on the day we left Florence, and my maid, who sat in the rumble, saw the mishap without knowing or suspecting the victim! I have done everything to obtain leave to visit you before I set out, or even to see you on my way; but Madame de Heidendorf is absolute, and she has so much important business in hand – such deep political affairs to transact at Vienna and Dresden – that I find it is impossible. “The Prince has promised to write at once about Frank. He says it will be better to obtain his promotion in the Austrian service before he enters the Russian, and that this shall take place immediately. I could see that on this point he was acutely alive to the fact of our humble position; but he knows from Lady Hester all about our family, and that the Daltons acknowledge nothing superior to them in birth. This, however, is always a difficulty to a foreigner; they have no idea of untitled nobility; and I saw his chagrin the other day when I told him to address papa as plain Monsieur. Since yesterday morning I am called Princess; and I cannot conceal from you the throb of delight the sound still gives me! I often stop to ask myself if this be all a dream, and shall I wake beside the fire and see dearest Nelly bending over some little group, and Hans with wondering eyes staring over her shoulders. “The Prince only intends to spend one winter in Russia. Madame de Heidendorf says that he will be named Ambassador at Paris; but I hope and trust not: I feel too acutely my inferiority for such a position. This she laughs at, and merely says, ‘*Nous verrons.*’ Of course, wherever I am, you will both be with me; meanwhile, what would you

wish to do? I told Monsieur Rubion, the Prince's secretary, that I wanted money, and he gave me these bills, so he called them, on Baden and Carlsruhe, as easily negotiable in that neighborhood; pray, say if they be serviceable. The Prince intends to visit you at Baden; and I suppose you will like to see him. His manners are perfect, and except a degree of constraint in first acquaintance, he is generally thought very agreeable. Such preparations as they are making for my journey, you 'd fancy I was a queen at the very least. All my *trousseau* is to come from Paris direct; and up to this I have merely what Madame de H. calls the strictly 'indispensable;' which, shall I own? contrives to fill two large fourgons and a heavy travelling-carriage. Nina is in a perfect ecstasy at everything, and is eternally 'draping' me in Brussels lace and Chantilly; so that, even while I write, these flimsy tissues are floating around me; while caskets of jewels and precious gems dazzle my eyes wherever I turn them.

"The whole is like a gorgeous vision; would that it might remain ever thus, for I almost tremble to take a step further. Are these unworthy fears? I hope they are."

Nelly paused, and laid down the letter on her knee. "Well, may I never see grace, if that letter isn't enough to confuse a bench of bishops!" cried Dalton. "She's marrying the first man in Europe, – be the other who he will, – and she has as many crotchets and misgivings about it as if it was little Hans, there, below! And he a Prince! a real Prince! – devil a doubt of it – that scatters the money about like chaff! Here's an order at sight for nine hundred gulden; and here's a bill at ten days – a nice date – for fourteen hundred and eighty-six Prussian dollars; and this is nearly as much more. Kate, my beauty, I knew you 'd do it! I never looked at you in your old clogs and the worsted cloak that I did n't think of the day I 'd see you in satin and velvet! Faix, it's the best bottle of claret in the Adler I 'll drink your health in this day! Nelly, who will we ask in to dinner?"

"Don't you think, papa, it were better we should not speak of this – "

"Why, better? Are we ashamed of it?"

"I mean, more prudent as regards ourselves, and more respectful to the Prince."

"Respectful – to my son-in-law! – that's 'more of it.' Upon my conscience, I'll have to go to school again in my old days. I know nothing of life at all, at all! Respect, indeed!"

"I would but suggest, papa, that for Kate's sake – "

"There – there – don't provoke me. I never set my heart on a thing yet – big or little – that I was n't met with a caution about this, or a warning about that, till at last I got so tutored and corrected and trained that, as Billy Morris used to say at whist, 'I dread a good hand more than a bad one.'"

"Far be it from me, dearest father," said Nelly, smiling, "to throw a shadow over a bright moment. If it will give you pleasure – "

"Sure I said it would, – sure I told you 't is what I 'd like. A fine dinner at the 'Schwan;' four gulden a head, without wine; a dozen of champagne in ice, hock for them that can drink it, and port and Lafitte for Peter Dalton and men of his own sentiments. There's the programme, Nelly, and you'll see if I can't fill up the details."

"Well, but we have yet much to do; here are several letters, – here is Frank's. Let us learn how the dear fellow fares."

Dalton sat down without speaking; there was, indeed, more of resignation than curiosity in his features, as he crossed his arms and listened.

"Dearest Nelly, – I only heard a few days ago that my last two letters had been stopped; they were not, as they should have been, submitted to my captain to read, and hence they were arrested and suppressed. This goes by a private hand – a friend of mine – a pedler from Donaueschingen – "

"A what? – a pedler is it?" broke in Dalton, angrily.

"Yes, papa; remember that poor Frank is still in the ranks."

“Well, God give me patience with you all!” burst out the old man, in a torrent of passion. “Does he know that he’s a Dalton? – does he feel blood in his veins? Why the blazes must he seek out a thieving blaguard with a pack full of damaged cambric to make a friend of? Is this the way the family’s getting up in the world?”

“Adolf Brawer, by name,” read on Nelly, in a low and subdued voice. “You will be surprised when I tell you that I owe all his kindness and good-nature to you, – yes, to your own dear self. On his way through the Tyrol he had bought two wooden statuettes, – one a young soldier asleep beside a well; the other a girl leaning from a window to hear the bugles of a departing regiment Can you guess whose they were? And when he came to know that I was the brother of the little N. D. that was sculptured, half hid in a corner, and that I was the original of the tired, wayworn recruit on the roadside, I thought he would have cried with enthusiasm.”

“Didn’t I often say it?” broke in Dalton, as, wringing his hands in despair, he paced the room with hasty strides. “Did n’t I warn you a thousand times about them blasted images, and tell you that, sooner or later, it would get about who made them? Didn’t I caution you about the disgrace you ‘d bring on us? The fear of this was over me this many a day. I had it like a dream on my mind, and I used to say to myself, ‘It will all come out yet.’” #

Nelly covered her face with her apron as these bitter words were spoken; but not a syllable, nor a sigh, did she reply to them; still, the frail garment shook with an emotion that showed how intensely she suffered.

“A Virgin sold here, an Angel Gabriel there; now it was Hamlet; another time Gotz with the iron hand. All the balderdash that ever came into your head scattered over the world to bring shame on us! And then to think of Kate!”

“Yes, dearest father, do think of her,” cried Nelly, passionately. “She is, indeed, an honor and a credit to you.”

“And so might you have been, too, Nelly,” rejoined he, half sorry for his burst of anger. “I ‘m sure I never made any difference between you. I treated you all alike, God knows.” And truly, if an indiscriminating selfishness could plead for him, the apology was admirable.

“Yes, papa, but Nature was less generous,” said Nelly, smiling through her tears; and she again turned to the letter before her. As if fearful to revive the unhappy discussion, she passed rapidly over Frank’s account of his friend’s ecstasy; nor did she read aloud till she came to the boy’s narrative of his own fortunes.

“You ask me about Count Stephen, and the answer is a short one. I have seen him only once. Our battalion, which was stationed at Laybach, only arrived in Vienna about three weeks ago, but feeling it a duty to wait on our relative, I obtained leave one evening to go and pay my respects. Adolf, who knew of my connection with the Field-Marshal, had lent me two hundred florins; and this, too, I was anxious to pay off, – another reason for this visit. “Well, I dressed myself in my best cadet cloth, and silk sword-knot, Nelly, – none of your ‘commissaire’ toggery, but all fine and smart-looking, as a gentleman-cadet ought to be, – and then calling a fiacre, I ordered the man to drive to the ‘Koertnor Thor,’ to the Field-Marshal von Auersberg’s quarters. I ‘m not sure if I did n’t say to my uncle’s. Away we went gayly, and soon drew up in an old-fashioned courtyard, from which a great stair led up four stories high, at the top of which the ‘Feld’ – so they called him – resided. This was somewhat of a come-down to my high-flown expectations, but nothing to what I felt as the door was opened by an old Jager with one leg, instead of, as I looked for, a lackey in a grand livery. “What is ‘t cadet?” said he, in a tone of the coolest familiarity. “The Field-Marshal von Auersberg lives here?” said I. “He nodded. “I

wish to see him.’ “He shook his head gravely, and scanning me from head to foot, said, ‘Not at this hour, cadet, – not at this hour.’ ““Let him see this card,’ said I, giving one with my name. ‘I ‘m certain he ‘ll receive me.’ “I believe if I had presented a pistol at him, the old fellow would have been less startled, as he exclaimed, ‘A cadet with a visiting-card! This would serve you little with the Feld, younker,’ cried he, handing it back to me; ‘he likes to see a soldier a soldier.’ ““Tell him my name, then,’ said I, angrily; ‘say that his grand-nephew, Frank Dalton, has been standing at his door in full parley with a servant for ten minutes.’ “The announcement created little of the astonishment I calculated on, and the old soldier merely replied, ‘All under field-officer’s rank come before eight of a morning. you cannot expect to have the privilege of an archduke.’ He was about to close the door in my face as he spoke, but I placed my shoulder against it and forced it back, thus securing an entrance within the forbidden precincts. ““Right about, quick march!’ cried he, pointing to the door, while his whole frame trembled with passion. ““Not till you have delivered my message,’ said I, calmly. ““Then Bey’m Blitzen I will deliver it, and see how you ‘ll like it,’ cried he, as he stumped away down a passage and entered a room at the end of it. I could soon hear the sound of voices, and for the moment I was almost determined to beat a retreat, when suddenly the old Jager came out and beckoned me forward. There was a grin of most diabolical delight on the old fellow’s features as I passed into the room and closed the door behind me. “As well as I could see in the imperfect light, for it was after sunset, the apartment was large and low-ceilinged, with bookshelves round the walls, and stands for weapons and military equipments here and there through it. At the stove, and busily engaged in watching a coffee-pot, sat the Feld himself, a loose gray overcoat covering his figure, and concealing all of him but two immense jackboots that peeped out beneath. He wore a Mütze, a kind of Hungarian cap, and a long pipe depended from his mouth, the bowl resting on the carpet. The most conspicuous feature of all was, however, his enormous moustache, which, white as snow, touched his collar-bone at either side. “He never spoke a word as I entered, but stared at me steadfastly and sternly for full three or four minutes. Half abashed by this scrutiny, and indignant besides at the reception, I was about to —

““Franz Carl Infantry, third battalion,’ said I, instantly saluting with my hand. ““Your name?” ““Frank Dalton.’ ““Your business?” ““To visit my grand-uncle, the Field-Marshal von Auersberg.’ ““And is it thus, younker,’ cried he, rising, and drawing himself up to his full height, ‘that you dare to present yourself before a Feldzeugmeister of the Imperial Army? Have they not taught you even the commonest rules of discipline? Have they left you in the native barbarism of your own savage country, that you dare, against my orders, present yourself before me?” ““I thought the claim of kindred – ’ began I. ““What know I of kindred, sirrah? What have kith and kin availed *me*? I have stood alone in the world. It was not to kindred I owed my life on the field of Rosbach; nor was it a relative stanchd my bleeding wounds at Wagram!’ ““The name of Dalton – ’ ““I have won a prouder one, sir, and would not be reminded by you from what I ‘ve started. Where ‘s your character-certificate?” ““I have not brought it with me, Herr General. I scarcely thought it would be the first question my father’s uncle would put to me.’ ““There was prudence in the omission, too, sir,’ said he, not heeding my remark. ‘But I have it here.’ And he drew from a portfolio on the table a small slip of paper, and read: ““Cadet Dalton, second company of the third battalion, Franz Carl Regiment. – Smart on service, and quick in discipline, but forward and petulant with those above him in rank.

Disposed to pride himself on birth and fortune, and not sufficiently submissive to orders. Twice in arrest, once, Kurzgeschossen.” A creditable character, sir! Twice in arrest and once in irons! And with this you claim kindred with a count of the empire, and an imperial field- marshal! On the fifth of last month you entertained a party at dinner at the Wilde Man, – most of them men of high rank and large fortune. On the eighteenth you drove through Maria Tell with a team of four horses, and passed the drawbridge and the moat in full gallop. So late as Wednesday last you hoisted a green flag on the steeple of the village church, on pretence of honoring your father’s birthday. I know each incident of your career, sir, and have watched you with shame and regret. Tell your father, when you write to him, that all the favor of my august master would not endure the test of two such protégés. And now, back to your quarters.’ “He motioned me to retire with a gesture, and I fell back, almost glad at any cost to escape. I had just reached the stair, when the Jager called me back to his presence. “Art an only son?” asked the Count, for the first time addressing me in the second person. “I bowed. “And hast three sisters?” “Two, Herr General.’ “Older or younger than thyself?” “Both older, sir.’ “How have they been brought up? Have they learned thrift and housecraft, or are they wasteful and reckless, as their native country and their name would bespeak them?” “Our humble fortune is the best answer to that question, sir.’ “It is not, sirrah!” cried he, angrily. ‘The spendthrift habit survives every remnant of the state that gave it birth, and the beggar can be as improvident as the prince. Go; thou hast as much to learn of the world as of thy duty. Head erect, sir; shoulders back; the right thumb more forwards. If the rest of the battalion be like thee, I’ll give them some work on the Prater ere long.’ “A haughty wave of his hand now finished our interview, and, once outside the door, I descended the stairs, a whole flight at every bound, in terror lest anything should induce him to recall me. “And this is Uncle Stephen, Nelly, – this the great protector we used to build our hopes upon, and flatter ourselves would be a second father to us! “When I came out into the street, I knew not which way to turn. I dreaded the very sight of a comrade, lest he should ask me about our meeting, what pocket-money he had given me, and how soon I should be an officer. It was only when I saw Adolf coming towards me that I remembered all about my debt to him, of which I had not spoken one word to my uncle. I ought to have told him so, frankly. Yes, Nelly, I can hear the murmured displeasure with which you read my confession, ‘that I could n’t do it.’ I was unequal to the effort, and could not bring myself to destroy that whole fabric of fictitious interest in which I had wrapped myself. What would Adolf have thought of me when I said, I have neither wealth nor station nor prospect, – as humble a soldier as the sentry you see yonder? What would become of that romance of life in which we have so often spent hours revelling in a brilliant future, every incident of which grew up in our united fancies, and seemed to assume reality as we discussed it? Where – oh, Nelly! to you I must reveal all – every weakness, every littleness of my nature – where would be the homage of respect the poor Bursche was wont to show the nephew of a field-marshal? No, it was above my strength; and so I took his arm, and talked away heedlessly about our meeting, avoiding, where I could, all mention of my uncle, and but jocularly affecting to think him an original, whose strange, old-fashioned manners almost concealed the strong traits of family affection. “What of thy promotion, Frank?” asked Adolf. “It will come in its own good time/ said I, carelessly. ‘Nothing causes more dissatisfaction than the rapid advancement of cadets of noble family.’ “But they could make thee a corporal, at least?” “I laughed scornfully at the remark, and merely said, ‘They may skip over the

whole sous-officier grade, and only remember me when I'm to be made a lieutenant/ "“Thou hast grown haughtier, Frank,” said he, half reproachfully, ‘since thy meeting with the “Feld.” Mayhap in a day or two thou wilt not like to be seen in company with a “Wander-Bursche”?’ “I was bursting to throw my arms round his neck, and say, ‘Never, whatever fortune have in store for me; thy friendship is like a brother’s, and can never be forgotten; ‘but Pride – yes, Nelly, the cursed pride against which you used to warn me – sealed my lips; and when I spoke, it was something so cold, so meaningless, and so unworthy that he left me. I know not how! No sooner was I alone, Nelly, than I burst into tears. I cried for very shame; and if agony could expiate my fault, mine should have done so. What humiliation before my friend could equal that I now felt before my own heart! I thought of all your teachings, dearest Nelly; of the lessons you gave me over and over against this besetting sin of my nature! I thought of our home, where poor Hanserl was treated by us as a friend! I thought of our last parting, and the words you spoke to me in warning against this very pride, ignoble and mean as it is; and, oh! what would I have given to have thrown myself into Adolf’s arms, and told him everything! I have never seen him since; he wrote to me a few lines, saying that he should pass through Baden on his way to Frankfort, and offering to carry a letter for me; but not once did he allude to my debt, nor was there the slightest hint of its existence. On this I wrote an acknowledgment of the loan, and a pressing entreaty that he would come and see me; but he pretended one thing and another, affected engagements at the only hours I was free, and at last abruptly sent for my letter just when I was writing it. I had much more to tell you, Nelly, of myself, of the service, and of my daily life here; but my thoughts are now disturbed and scattered; and I feel, too, how your shame for my short-coming will take away interest from what I say. You, Nelly, will have courage to be just: tell him all that I have been weak enough to conceal; let him know what suffering my unworthy shame has cost me; and, above all, that I am not ungrateful. “It seems like a dream all that you tell me of Kate. Is she still in Italy, and where? Would she write to me? I am ashamed to ask the question of herself. They spoke of our brigade being sent to Lombardy; but even there I might be far away from her; and if near, in the very same city, our stations would separate us still more widely. Oh, Nelly! is it worth all the success ever ambition the most successful won, thus to tear up the ties of family, and make brothers and sisters strangers? Would that I were back again with you, and dearest Kate, too! I see no future here; the dull round of daily discipline, teaching nothing but obedience, shuts out speculation and hope! Where are the glorious enterprises, the splendid chances I often dreamed of? My happiest moments now are recalling the past; the long winter evenings beside the hearth, while Hans was reading out to us. There are rumors of great changes in the world of Europe; but to us they are only the thunderings of a distant storm, to break out in what quarter we know not. Oh, Nelly! if it should lead to war! if some glorious struggle were to break in upon this sluggish apathy! “Adolf has sent again for this letter, so I must close it. He will not, he says, pass through Baden, but will post this in Munich – so good-bye, dearest sister. Tell poor papa all that you dare to tell of me, and farewell.

“Frank Dalton.

“When you write it must be under cover to the ‘Herr Hauptman von Gauss, 2ten Compagnie, 3 Linien Bataillon, Franz Carl Infanterie.’ Don’t forget this long address, nor to add a line to the captain himself, who is a good-looking fellow, but somewhat conceited.

“I have just heard old Auersberg is to have a command again. I ‘m heartily sorry for it. So much for family influence!”

If the reader’s patience has lasted through this long letter of Frank’s, it was more than Peter Dalton’s did. For what between his ecstasy at Kate’s good fortune, his own rambling speculations on all that should follow from it, and, above all, what from the slurring monotonous tone in which Nelly passed over such portions as she did not wish him to hear, he grew gradually more abstracted and dreamy, and at last fell off into a deep and most happy slumber. Not a syllable did he hear of the old Feld’s reception of Frank; nor did he even awake as little Hans stumped into the room, with a staff in either hand, – aids that, since his accident, he could never dispense with.

“I heard that you had letters, Fräulein,” said he. “Do they bring good tidings?”

“Some would call them so, Hanserl,” said she, with a sigh. “Kate is about to be married.”

Hanserl made no reply, but sat slowly down, and crossed his arms before him.

“The great Russian Prince Midchekoff, of whom you may have heard.”

“I have seen him, Fräulein; he was here in Baden, three years ago.”

“Oh, then, tell me, Hanserl, what is he like? Is he young and frank-looking? Seems he one that should have won a maiden’s heart so suddenly, that – that – ”

“No, not that she could n’t have written to her sister and asked for counsel, Fräulein,” said Hans, continuing her sentence. “The Prince is a cold, austere man, proud to his equals, I believe, but familiar enough to such as me. I remember how he asked me of my life, where I came from, and how I lived. He seemed curious to hear about the train of thoughts suggested by living amid objects of such childish interest, and asked me, ‘If I did not often fancy that this mock world around me was the real one?’ ‘You are right, Herr Prints,’ said I; ‘but, after all, here, at least, we are equals.’ ‘How so?’ said he. ‘That *your* real world is as great a mockery as mine.’ ‘Thou are right, dwarf,’ said he, thoughtfully, and fell a-musing. He should not have called me dwarf, for men know me as Hans Roëckle, – and this is your sister’s husband!”

“Is he mild and gentle-mannered?” asked Nelly, eagerly.

“The great are always so, so far as I have seen; none but base metal rings loudly, maiden. It is part of their pride to counterfeit humility.”

“And his features, Hans?”

“Like one of those portraits in the gallery at Wurtzburg. One who had passions and a temper for a feudal age, and was condemned to the slavery of our civilization.”

“He is much older than Kate?” asked she again.

“I have seen too few like him even to guess at his age; besides, men of his stamp begin life with old temperaments, and time wears them but little.”

“Oh, Hanserl, this seems not to promise well. Kate’s own nature is frank, generous, and impulsive; how will it consort with the cold traits of his?”

“She marries not for happiness, but for ambition, maiden. They who ascend the mountain-top to look down upon the scene below them, must not expect the sheltering softness of the valley at their feet. The Fräulein Kate is beautiful, and she would have the homage that is paid to beauty. She has chosen her road in life; let us at least hope she knows how to tread it!”

There was a tone of almost sternness in Hanserl’s manner that Nelly well knew boded deep and intense feeling, and she forebore to question him further for some time.

“You will leave this, then, Fräulein?” said he at last “You will quit the humble valley for the great world?”

“I know not, Hanserl, what my father may decide. Kate speaks of our joining her in Russia; but the long Journey in his infirm state, not to speak of other reasons, may prevent this. Shall I tell you of Frank? Here is a long letter from him.” And, almost without waiting for his reply, she read out the greater portion of the epistle.

“I like the old Feld!” cried Hans, enthusiastically. “He would teach the boy submission, and self-reliance, too, – lessons that, however wide apart they seem, go ever hand in hand; an old warrior that has trained his bold nature to habits of obedience in many a year of trial and injustice, unfriended and alone, with nothing but his stout heart and good sword to sustain him. I like that Feld, and would gladly pledge him in a glass of Steinberger!”

“And you shall, my little man,” said Dalton, waking up, and catching the last words of Hanserl’s speech. “The old Count was kind to Frank, and I ‘ll drink his health this night, with all the honors. Read him the letter, Nelly. Show him how old Stephen received the boy. That’s blood for you! – a true Dalton!”

Hanserl stared from father to daughter, and back again, without speaking; while Nelly, blushing deeply, held down her head, without a word.

“His letter to us was dry enough. But what matter for that? He never wrote a line, – maybe, did n’t speak a word of English for upwards of forty years. You can’t expect a man to have the ‘elegant correspondent’ at his fingers’ ends after that space of time. But the heart! – that’s the main point, Hans. The heart is in the right place. Read that bit over again, Nelly; I forget the words he said.”

“Oh, no, papa. Hans has Just beard it all, from beginning to end; and you know we have so much to do. Here’s Lady Hester’s note, and here’s one from the Prince, still unopened.”

“Ay, to be sure. I ‘m certain you ‘ll excuse me, Hans,” said Dalton, putting on his spectacles, while he assumed a manner of condescending urbanity very puzzling to the poor dwarf. “Why, Nelly dear, this is French. Give me that note of Lady Hester’s, and do you take this. Oh, by my conscience, I ‘m no better off now! The devil such writing as this ever I seen! It’s all ‘m’s’ and ‘w’s’ every bit of it. You’ll keep them both for the evening, my dear. Hans will dine with us, and I ‘ll go out to look for a bit of fish, and see if I can find another pleasant fellow to round off the table with us. God be with old Kilmurray M’Mahon, where I could have had twenty as easy as two, and each of them a good warrant for four bottles, besides! Is n’t it a droll world?” muttered he, as he took down his hat and descended the stairs. “A good dinner, and only a cripple for company! Faix! I ‘m like the chap in the Bible, that had to ask the beggars and the blaguards when he could n’t get better.” And with this very wise reflection, Peter Dalton hummed a Jig to himself as he took his way to the fish-market.

CHAPTER V. A HAPPY DAY FOR PETER DALTON

A youthful heir never experienced a more glorious burst of delight on the morning of his twenty-first birthday, than did Peter Dalton feel as he sauntered down the principal street of Baden. It was with a step almost elastic, and his head high, that he went along; not humbly returning the “Good-day” of the bowing shopkeeper, but condescendingly calling his worthy creditors – for such nearly all of them were – by their Christian names, he gave them to believe that he was still, as ever, their kind and generous patron.

There was scarcely a shop or a stall he did not linger beside for a minute or two. Everywhere there was something not only which he liked, but actually needed. Never did wants accumulate so rapidly! With a comprehensive grasp they extended to every branch of trade and merchandise, – ranging from jewelry to gin, and taking in all, from fur slippers to sausages.

His first visit was to Abel Kraus, the banker and moneylender, – a little den, which often before he had entered with a craven heart and a sinking spirit; for Abel was a shrewd old Israelite, and seemed to read the very schedule of a man’s debts, in the wrinkles around his mouth. Dalton now unbarred the half door and stalked in, as if he would carry the place by storm.

The man of money was munching his breakfast of hard eggs and black bread, – the regulation full diet of misers in all Germany, – when Peter cavalierly touched his hat and sat down. Not a word did Abel speak. No courtesies about the season or the weather, the funds or the money-market, were worth bestowing on so poor a client; and so he ate on, scarcely deigning even a glance towards him.

“When you ‘ve done with the garlic, old boy, I ‘ve some work for you,” said Dalton, crossing his arms pretentiously.

“But what if I do not accept your work? What if I tell you that we shall have no more dealings together? The two last bills – ”

“They’ll be paid, Abel, – they’ll be paid. Don’t put yourself in a passion. Times is improving, – Ireland ‘s looking up, man.”

“I think she is,” muttered the Jew, insolently; “she is looking up like the beggar that asks for alms yonder.”

“Tear and ages!” cried Dalton, with a stroke of his fist upon the table that made every wooden bowl of gold and silver coin jump and ring again, – “tear and ages! take care what you say! By the soul in my body, if you say a syllable against the old country, I ‘ll smash every stick in the place, and your own bones, besides! Ye miserable ould heathen! that has n’t a thought above sweating a guinea, – how dare you do it?”

“Why do you come into my counting-house to insult me, saar? Why you come where no one ask you?”

“Is it waiting for an invitation I’d be, Abel? Is it expecting a card with ould Kraus’s compliments?” said Dalton, laughing. “Sure, isn’t the place open like the fish-market, or the ball-room, or the chapel, or any place of diversion? There, now; keep your temper, old boy. I tell ye, there’s luck before ye! What d’ye think of that?” And, as he spoke, he drew forth one of the bills, and handed it across the counter; and then, after gloating, as it were, over the changed expression of the Jew’s features, he handed a second, and a third.

“These are good papers, Herr von Dalton; no better! The exchange, too, is in your favor; we are giving – let me see – ten and three-eighths ‘Convenzions-Gelt’.”

“To the devil I fling your three-eighths!” cried Dalton. “I never forgot the old song at school that says, ‘Fractions drives me mad.’”

“Ah, always droll, – always merry!” cackled out Abel. “How will you have these moneys?”

“In a bag, – a good strong canvas-bag!”

“Yes, to be sure, in a bag; but I was asking how you ‘d have them. I mean, in what coin, – in what for ‘Gelt.”

“Oh, that’s it!” cried Dalton. “Well, give me a little of everything. Let me have ‘Louis’ to spend, and ‘Gros-chen’ to give the beggars. Bank-notes, too, I like; one feels no regretting parting with the dirty paper that neither jingles nor shines: and a few crown pieces, Abel; the ring of them on a table is like a brass band!”

“So you shall, – so you shall, Herr von Dalton. Ha, ha, ha! you are the only man ever make me laugh!”

“By my conscience, then, it’s more than you deserve, Abel; for you’ve very often nearly made *me* cry,” said Dalton, with a little sigh over the past, as he recalled it to his memory.

The Jew did not either heed or hear the remark; for, having put away the remnant of his frugal breakfast, he now began a very intricate series of calculations respecting interest and exchange and commission, at which poor Dalton gazed in a most complete mystification.

“Fourteen hundred and sixty-three, at ten three-eighths, – less cost of commission; I will not charge you the one per cent – ”

“Charge all that’s fair, and no favor, old boy.”

“I mean that I will not treat the Herr von Dalton like a stranger – ”

“I was going to say, treat me like a Christian,” said Dalton, laughing; “but maybe that’s the most expensive thing going.”

“Always droll, – always have his jest,” cackled Abel. “Now there’s an agio on gold, you pay five kreutzers for every Louis.”

“By George! I ‘ll take a ship-load of them at the same price.”

“Ha! U mean you pay that over the value,” said the Jew.

“Faix! I often promised to pay more,” said Dalton, sighing; “and what’s worse, on stamped paper too!”

As the Jew grew deeper in his figures, Dalton rambled on about Ireland and her prospects, for he wished it to be supposed that his present affluence was the long-expected remittance from his estates. “We ‘ll get right yet,” muttered he, “if they ‘ll only give us time; but ye see, this is the way it is: we’re like an overloaded beast that can’t pull his cart through the mud, and then the English comes up, and thrashes us. By course, we get weaker and weaker – licking and abusing never made any one strong yet. At last down we come on our knees with a smash. Well, ye ‘d think, then, that anybody with a grain of sense would say, ‘Take some of the load off the poor devil’s back – ease him a bit tell he gets strength.’ Nothing of the kind. All they do is to tell us that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for falling – that every other people was doing well but ourselves – that it’s a way we have of lying down, just to get somebody to pick us up, and such like. And the blaguard newspapers raises the cry against us, and devil a thief or a housebreaker or a highway robber they take, that they don’t put him down in the police reports as a ‘hulking Irishman,’ or a ‘native of the Emerald Isle.’ ‘Paddy Fitzsimons, or Peter O’Shea, was brought up this mornin’ for cutting off his wife’s head with a trowel.’ ‘Molly Maguire was indicted for scraping her baby to death with an oyster-shell.’ That’s the best word they have for us! ‘Ain’t ye the plague of our lives?’ they’re always saying. ‘Do ye ever give us a moment’s peace?’ And why the blazes don’t ye send us adrift, then? Why don’t ye let us take our own road? We don’t want your company – faix! we never found it too agreeable. It’s come to that now, that it would better be a Hottentot or a Chinese than an Irishman! Oh dear, oh dear, but we ‘re hardly treated!”

“Will you run your eye over that paper, Herr von Dalton, and see if it be all correct?” said Abel, handing him a very complex-looking array of figures.

“‘T is little the wiser I ‘ll be when I do,” muttered Dalton to himself, as he put on his spectacles and affected to consider the statement. “Fourteen hundred and sixty-three – I wish they were pounds, but they ‘re only florins – and two thousand eight hundred and twenty-one – five and two is seven and nine is fifteen. No, seven and nine is – I wish Nelly was here. Bad luck to the multiplication-

table. I used to be licked for it every day when I was a boy, and it's been a curse to me since I was a man. Seven and nine is fourteen, or thereabouts – a figure would n't signify much, one way or f other. Interest at three-quarters for twenty-one days – there I 'm done complete! Out of the four first rules in Gough I'm a child, and indeed, to tell the truth, I 'm no great things after subtraction.”

“You will perceive that I make the charges for postage, commission, and other expenses in one sum. This little claim of fifty-eight florins covers all.”

“Well, and reasonable it is, that I must say,” cried Dalton, who, looking at the whole as a lucky windfall, was by no means indisposed to see others share in the good fortune. “How much is coming to me, Abel?”

“Your total balance is four thousand two hundred and twenty-seven florins eight kreutzers, Müntze,” said Abel, giving the sum a resonance of voice highly imposing and impressive.

“How many pounds is that now?” asked Peter.

“Something over three hundred and fifty pounds sterling, sir.”

“Is it? Faith! a neat little sum. Not but I often got rid of as much of an evening at blind-hookey, with old Carters, of the ‘Queen’s Bays.’ Ye don’t know Carters? Faix! and ye ‘d be the very man he would know, if ye were in the same neighborhood. I wish he was here to-day; and that reminds me that I must go over to the market and see what’s to be had. Ye don’t happen to know if there’s any fish to-day?”

Abel could not answer this important question, but offered to send his servant to inquire; but Dalton, declining the attention, strolled out into the street, jingling his Napoleons in his pocket as he went, and feeling all the importance and self-respect that a well-filled purse confers on him who has long known the penniless straits of poverty. He owed something on every side of him; but he could bear to face his creditors now; he was neither obliged to be occupied with a letter, nor sunk in a fit of abstraction as he passed them; nay, he was even jocular and familiar, and ventured to criticise the wares for which, once, he was almost grateful.

“Send your boy down to the house for some money – ye need n’t mind the bill; but I ‘ll give you fifty florins. There’s a trifle on account. Put them ten Naps, to my credit; that will wipe off some of our scores; it’s good for forty crowns.” Such were the brief sentences that he addressed to the amazed shopkeepers as he passed along; for Peter, like Louis Philippe, couldn’t bear the sight of an account, and always paid something in liquidation. It was with great reluctance that he abstained from inviting each of them to dinner; nothing but his fear of displeasing Nelly could have restrained him. He would have asked the whole village if he dared, ay, and made them drunk, too, if they ‘d have let him. “She’s so high in her notions,” he kept muttering to himself: “that confounded pride about family, and the like! Well, thank God! I never had that failing. If I knew we were better than other people, it never made me unneighborly; I was always free and affable; my worst enemy could n’t say other of me. I ‘d like to have these poor devils to dinner, and give them a skinful for once in their lives, just to drink Kate’s health, and Frank’s; they ‘d think of the Daltons for many a long year to come – the good old Dalton blood, that never mixed with the puddle! What a heavenly day it is! and an elegant fine market. There’s a bit of roasting beef would feed a dozen; and maybe that isn’t a fine trout! Well, well, but them’s cauliflowers!. Chickens and ducks – chickens and ducks – a whole street of them! And there’s a wild turkey – mighty good eating, too! and venison! – ah! but it has n’t the flavor, nor the fat! Faix! and not bad either, a neck of mutton with onions, if one had a tumbler of whiskey-punch afterwards.”

Thus communing with himself, he passed along, totally inattentive to the solicitations of those who usually supplied the humble wants of his household, and who now sought to tempt him by morsels whose merits lay rather in frugality than good cheer.

As Dalton drew near his own door, he heard the sounds of a stranger’s voice from within. Many a time a similar warning had apprised him that some troublesome dun had gained admittance, and was torturing poor Nelly with his importunities; and on these occasions Peter was wont, with more

cunning than kindness, to steal noiselessly downstairs again, and wait till the enemy had evacuated the fortress. Now, however, a change had come over his fortunes, and with his hat set jauntily on one side, and his hands stuck carelessly in his pockets, he kicked open the door with his foot, and entered.

Nelly was seated near the stove, in conversation with a man who, in evident respect, had taken his place near the door, and from which he rose to salute Dalton as he came in. The traveller – for such his “blouse” or travelling-frock showed him to be, as well as the knapsack and stick at his feet – was a hale, fresh-looking man of about thirty; his appearance denoting an humble walk in life, but with nothing that bordered on poverty.

“Herr Brawer, papa, – Adolf Brawer,” said Nelly, whispering the last words, to remind him more quickly of the name.

“Servant, sir,” said Dalton, condescendingly; for the profound deference of the stranger’s manner at once suggested to him their relative conditions.

“I kiss your hand,” said Adolf, with the respectful salutation of a thorough Austrian, while he bowed again with even deeper humility.

“The worthy man who was so kind to Frank, papa,” said Nelly, in deep confusion, as she saw the scrutinizing and almost depreciating look with which Dalton regarded him.

“Oh, the pedler!” said Dalton, at last, as the remembrance flashed on him. “This is the pedler, then?”

“Yes, papa. He came out of his way, from Durlach, Just to tell us about Frank; to say how tall he had grown – taller than himself, he says – and so good-looking, too. It was so kind in him.”

“Oh, very kind, no doubt of it, – very kind indeed!” said Dalton, with a laugh of most dubious expression. “Did he say nothing of Frank’s debt to him? Has n’t that ‘I O U’ You were talking to me about anything to say to this visit?”

“He never spoke of it, never alluded to it,” cried she, eagerly.

“Maybe he won’t be so delicate with me,” said Dalton. “Sit down, Mr. Brawer; make no ceremony here. We’re stopping in this little place till our house is got ready for us. So you saw Frank, and he’s looking well?”

“The finest youth in the regiment. They know him through all Vienna as the ‘Handsome Cadet.’”

“And so gentle-mannered and unaffected,” cried Nelly.

“Kind and civil to his inferiors?” said Dalton; “I hope he’s that?”

“He condescended to know *me*,” said Brawer, “and call me his friend.”

“Well, and maybe ye were,” said Peter, with a majestic wave of the hand. “A real born gentleman, as Frank is, may take a beggar off the streets and be intimate with him. Them’s my sentiments. Mark what I say, Mr. Brawer, and you’ll find, as you go through life, if it is n’t true; good blood may mix with the puddle every day of the year, and not be the worse of it!”

“Frank is so grateful to you,” broke in Nelly, eagerly; “and we are so grateful for all your kindness to him!”

“What an honor to *me*! that he should so speak of me!” said the pedler, feelingly, – “I, who had no claim upon his memory.”

“There was a trifle of money between you, I think,” said Dalton, ostentatiously; “have you any notion of what it is?”

“I came not here to collect a debt, Herr von Dalton,” said Adolf, rising, and assuming a look of almost fierceness in his pride.

“Very well, very well; just as you please,” said Dalton, carelessly; “it will come with his other accounts in the half-year; for, no matter how liberal a man is to his boys, he’ll be pestered with bills after all! There’s blaguards will be lending them money, and teachin’ them extravagance, just out of devilment, I believe. I know well how it used to be with myself when I was in old ‘Trinity,’ long ago. There was a little chap of the name of Foley, and, by the same token, a pedler, too – ”

“Oh, papa, he’s going away, and you have n’t thanked him yet!” cried Nelly, feelingly.

“What a hurry he’s in!” said Dalton, as he watched the eager haste with which the pedler was now arranging the straps of his knapsack.

“Would you not ask him to stay – to dine with us?” faltered Nelly, in a low, faint whisper.

“The pedler – to dine?” asked Dalton, with a look of astonishment

“Frank’s only friend!” sighed she, mournfully.

“By my conscience, sometimes I don’t know if I ‘m standing on my head or my heels,” cried Dalton, as he wiped his brows, with a look of utter bewilderment. “A pedler to dinner! There now – that’s it – more haste worse speed: he’s broke that strap in his hurry!”

“Shall I sew it for you?” said Nelly, stooping down and taking out her needle as she spoke.

“Oh, Fräulein, how good of you!” cried Adolf; and his whole face beamed with an expression of delight. “How dearly shall I value this old pack hereafter!”

These last words, scarcely muttered above his breath, were overheard by Nelly, and a deep blush covered her cheeks as she bent over the work.

“Where’s your own maid? Couldn’t one of the women do it as well?” cried Dalton, impatiently. “Ye’d not believe, Mr. Brawer, that we have the house full of servants this minute; a set of devils feasting and fattening at one’s expense.”

“Thanks, Fräulein,” said the pedler, as she finished; “You little know how I shall treasure this hereafter.”

“Ask him to stay, papa,” whispered Nelly once more.

“Sure he’s a pedler!” muttered Dalton, indignantly.

“At least thank him. Tell him you are grateful to him.”

“He ‘d rather I ‘d buy ten yards of damaged calico, – that’s the flattery *he* ‘d understand best,” said Dalton, with a grin.

“Farewell, Herr von Dalton. Farewell, Fräulein!” said Adolf. And with a bow of deep respect he slowly retired from the room, while Nelly turned to the window to conceal her shame and sorrow together.

“It was this very morning,” muttered Dalton, angrily, “when I spoke of giving a little dinner-party, you did nothing but turn up your nose at this, that, and t’ other. There was nobody good enough, forsooth! There was Monsieur Ratteau, the ‘croupier’ of the tables there, a very nice man, with elegant manners and the finest shirt-studs ever I seen, and you would n’t hear of him.”

Nelly heard little of this reproachful speech, for, sunk in the recess of the window, she was following with her eyes the retiring figure of Adolf Brawer. He had just crossed the “Plate,” and ere he turned into a side street he stopped, wheeled round, and made a gesture of farewell towards the spot where, unseen by him, Nelly was still standing.

“He is gone!” muttered she, half aloud.

“Well, God speed him!” rejoined Dalton, testily. “I never could abide a pedler.”

CHAPTER VI. MADAME DE HEIDENDORF

Kate Dalton's was a heavy heart as, seated beside her new friend, she whirled along the road to Vienna. The scenery possessed every attraction of historic interest and beauty. The season was the glorious one of an Italian spring. There were ancient cities, whose very names were like spells to memory. There were the spots of earth that Genius has consecrated to immortality. There were the scenes where Poetry caught its inspiration, and around which, even yet, the mind-created images of fancy seem to linger, all to interest, charm, and amuse her, and yet she passed them without pleasure, almost without notice.

The splendid equipage in which she travelled, the hundred appliances of ease and luxury around her, the obsequious, almost servile devotion of her attendants, recalled but one stern fact, – that she had sold herself for all these things; that for them she had bartered her warm affections, – her love of father and sister and brother, – the ties of home and of kindred, even to the Faith at whose altar she had bent her knees in infancy. She had given all for greatness.

In all her castle-buildings of a future, her own family had formed figures in the picture. To render her poor father happy; to surround his old age with the comforts he pined after; to open to dear Nelly sources of enjoyment in the pursuit she loved; to afford Frank the means of associating with his comrades of rank, to mix in that society for which he longed, – these were her objects, and for them she was willing to pay dearly. But now she was not to witness the happiness of those she loved. Already the hard conditions of her contract were to be imposed. Banishment first, then Isolation; who could say what after?

Her travelling-companion was scarcely well calculated to smooth down the difficulties of this conflict in her mind. Madame de Heidendorf was the very reverse of Lady Hester. Without the slightest pretension to good looks herself, she assumed to despise everything like beauty in others, constantly associating its possession with the vanity of weak intellects; she threw a kind of ridicule over these “poor, pretty things,” as she loved to call them, which actually seemed to make beauty and folly convertible terms. Political intrigue, or, to speak more fairly, mischief-making in state affairs, was her great and only passion. By dint of time, patience, considerable cunning, and a very keen insight into character, she had succeeded in obtaining the intimacy of many of the first statesmen of Europe. Many had trusted her with the conduct of little matters which the dignity of diplomacy could not stoop to. She had negotiated several little transactions, opened the way to reconciliations, smoothed the road to bribes, and allayed the petty qualms of struggling morality, where any other than a feminine influence would have been coarse and indelicate.

As a good monarchist, she was always well received at the Austrian Court, and in St. Petersburg was accustomed to be treated with peculiar honor.

By what amount of compensation, or in what shape administered, Midchekoff had secured her present services, this true history is unable to record; but that Kate was eminently fortunate, drawing such a prize in the lottery of life as to enter the world under *her* auspices, were facts that she dwelt upon without ceasing.

Frankness and candor are very charming things. They are the very soul of true friendship, and the spirit of all affectionate interest; but they can be made very disagreeable elements of mere acquaintanceship. Such was Madame de Heidendorf's. She freely told Kate, that of all the great Midchekoff's unaccountable freaks, his intended marriage with herself was the very strangest; and that to unite his vast fortune and high position with mere beauty was something almost incredible. There was a landgravine of Hohenhœkingen, an Archduchess, a *main gauche* of the Austrian house itself; there was a granddaughter of the Empress Catherine, with any of whom she could easily have opened negotiations for him, – all of them alliances rich in political influences. Indeed, there was another party, – she was not at liberty to mention the name; and though, to be sure, she was “blind

and almost idiotic,” a union with her would eventually have made him a “Serene Highness.” “So you see, my dear,” said she, in winding up, “what you have cost him! Not,” added she, after a few seconds’ pause, – “not but I have known such marriages turn out remarkably well. There was that Prince Adalbert of Bohemia, who married the singing woman, – what’s her name? – that young creature that made such a sensation at the ‘Scala,’ – ‘La Biondina’ they called her. Well, it is true, he only lived with her during the Carnival; but there she is now, with her handsome house in the Bastey, and the prettiest equipage in the Prater. I know several similar cases. The Archduke Max and Prince Ravitzkay, – though, perhaps, not him; for I believe he sent that poor thing away to the mines.”

“His wife – to the mines!” gasped Kate, in terror.

“Don’t be frightened, my dear child,” said Madame, smiling; “be a good girl, and you shall have everything you like. Meanwhile, try and unlearn all those *gaucheries* you picked up with that strange Lady Hester. It was a shocking school of manners, – all those eccentric, out-of-the-way people, who lounged in and lounged out, talking of nothing but each other, utterly ignorant of the great interests that are at stake in Europe at this moment Try, therefore, and forget that silly coterie altogether. When we arrive at Vienna, you will be presented to the Archduchess Louisa.”

“And I shall see dear – dear Frank!” burst out Kate, with an irrepressible delight.

“And who is Frank, Madame?” said the other, proudly drawing herself up.

“My brother, – my only brother, – who is in the Austrian service.”

“Is he on the Emperor’s staff?”

“I know nothing of his position, only that he is a cadet.”

“A cadet, child! Why, do you know that that means a common soldier, – a creature that mounts with a musket, or carries a bread-bag over its shoulder through the streets in a fatigue-jacket?”

“I care nothing for all that. He may be all you say, and twice as humble, but he is my brother Frank still, – the playfellow with whom I passed the day when – when I was happy – as I shall never be again! – the fond, kind brother, whom we were all so proud of.”

An expression of scornful compassion on Madame de Heidendorf’s features at once stopped Kate, and she covered her face with her hands to hide her shame.

“Madame la Princesse,” began the Countess, – for whenever she peculiarly desired to impress Kate with her duties, she always prefaced the lesson by her new title, – “the past must be forgotten, or you will find yourself totally unable to compete with the difficulties of your station. There is but one way to make the Prince’s *mésalliance* pardonable, which is by as seldom as possible parading its details. If, then, you insist upon seeing your brother during our stay at Vienna, it must be in secret you said something, I think, of an old field-marshal, – a connection?”

“My father’s uncle, Madame.”

“Very true. Well, your brother can come with some letter or message from him; or if Nina, your maid, has no objection, he might pass for a lover of hers.”

“Madame!” cried Kate, indignantly.

“I said, if Nina made no objection,” said Madame de Heidendorf, as though answering the indignant exclamation. “But these are matters of *my* consideration, Madame, – at least, if I understand the spirit of the Prince’s instructions.”

Some such scene as this, usually closing with a similar peroration, formed the conversation of the road; and hour by hour Kate’s courage fell lower, as she contemplated all that her elevation had cost her. And what a mockery was it, after all! It was true that she journeyed in a carriage with all the emblazonry of royalty; that a group of uncovered lackeys attended her as she descended; that she was ever addressed by a proud title; a respectful, submissive devotion surrounding her at every instant. But, amid all this, there was not one look, one word of kindness; nothing of interest or sympathy with her solitary grandeur. It mattered little that the bars of her cell were of gold; it was a prison still.

With what eagerness did she turn from the present, with all its splendor, to think of her former life, when, wandering among the hills of Baden she had listened to little Hans, or watched dear Nelly,

as the first gleams of her intentions began to manifest themselves on a sculptured group. With what rapture had she heard passages that seemed akin to something she had felt but could not express! How had she loved the changeful effects of light and shade on a landscape where every tree or rock or cliff was familiar to her! Oh, if she could but be back again, hopeful, ardent, and trusting, as she once was! Oh, if the brief past could be but a dream, and she were once more beside her father and Nelly, knowing nothing of that world which, in so short a space, had revealed so much before her! Even to those who so lately had supplied the place of family to her, all were gone, and she was utterly alone.

She did not dare to think of George Onslow. It seemed to her like a treason to recall his memory; and if his image did rise at times before her fancy, a burning blush would cover her cheek, and a sense of shame would send a throb like agony through her heart. The plans and projects for her future life she heard of without interest; a vague and confused impression of a long journey, halting here and there to be presented to certain great and distinguished persons, and finally of her arrival at St. Petersburg, were all that she knew. That the Prince was to join her there, and then, with the Emperor's permission, return with her to the south of Europe, – such were the outlines of a career over which a sinking heart threw a gloomy shadow.

Madame de Heidendorf was too occupied with her own thoughts to notice this despondency; besides that, she was incessantly teaching Kate some one requisite or other of that rigid etiquette which prevailed in the society she was about to enter; the precise titles by which she was to address this or that personage; how many courtesies to give here, how many reverences there, – little educational exercises that were always accompanied by some warning admonition of their importance to one who, like herself, had never seen anything like good society, and whose breaches of good breeding would be certain of being severely commented on.

“Think of the Prince, Madame,” she would say; “think of what he will suffer when they repeat any of your transgressions. I am afraid there are many humiliations in store for him. And what a step to take at such a moment, with these horrible Socialist doctrines abroad, – these levelling theories of equality, and so forth. I hope his Majesty the Emperor will pardon him; I hope he will forgive you.”

This was a favorite speech of hers, and so often repeated that Kate at last began to look on herself as a great criminal, and even speculated on what destiny should befall her if the Emperor proved unmerciful.

These were sorry resources to shorten the weariness on a Journey, and Kate felt a throb of pleasure – the first she had experienced – when the towers of St. Stephen, in the far distance, announced the approach to Vienna.

CHAPTER VII. AT VIENNA

The gossiping world of Vienna had a new subject for speculation and interest, as a guard of honor was seen standing at a large palace near the “Hoff;” and the only information to explain the mystery was that some great diplomatist had arrived the evening before, and Heaven knew what wonderful events were in his charge and keeping. A gigantic “Chasseur,” in green and gold, who lounged about the portal, followed by a great dog, – a “fanghund,” whose silver collar was embossed with many a quartering, – had engaged the attention of a very considerable crowd, which opened from time to time to permit the passage of some royal or princely equipage. As they thus fell back, a chance look would be directed upwards to the windows of the first floor, and there, passingly, they caught glimpses of one whose beauty soon formed the theme of every tongue. This was Kate Dalton, who, now rested from the fatigue of her journey, and dressed in the most becoming fashion, walked up and down a splendid saloon, watching to catch every sound, or gazing earnestly from the window to catch any sight that might betoken her brother’s coming. At Madame de Heidendorf’s suggestion she had written a few lines that morning early to the Field-Marshal von Dalton, entreating, as a great favor, that he would procure leave for Frank to come to her, and pass as much of his time as possible with her during her stay in Vienna. The note, brief as it was, cost her some trouble; she felt that much explanation might be necessary to state her present position, – even who she was, – and yet this was a subject she had no heart to enter into. Some expressions of affectionate interest towards himself would also have been fitting, but she could not find time for them. Frank, and Frank alone, was in her thoughts, and she left everything to the old General’s ingenuity, as she concluded her note by subscribing herself, “Your affectionate niece, Kate Dalton, Affianced Princesse de Midchekoff.”

It was the first time that she had written the words, – the first time that she had ever impressed that massive seal of many quarterings, so royal-looking as it seemed. It was, also, the first time she had ever given an order to one of her servants; and the obsequious bows of the groom of the chamber, as he withdrew, were all separate and distinct sensations, – low, but clear knockings of vanity at her heart, to which every object around contributed its aid. The apartment was splendid; not in that gorgeous taste of modern decoration of which she had seen so much already, but in a more stately fashion, recalling the grandeur of a past age, and exhibiting traces of a long line of princely occupants. The very portraits along the walls had a proud and haughty bearing, and the massive chairs glittered in all the blaze of heraldry. If she looked out, it was the towers of the “Hoff Bourg” – the Home of the Hapsburgs – met her eye. If she listened, it was the clank of a soldier’s salute broke the stillness; while the dull roll of wheels beneath the arched gateway told of the tide of visitors who came to pay their homage.

If Kate’s heart had been less bound up with anxiety to see her brother, the scene beneath her window would have afforded her some interest, as equipage after equipage succeeded, – now the quiet splendor of a court chariot, now the more glaring magnificence of a cardinal’s carriage. Here came the lumbering old vehicle of an archbishop, the reverential salute of the crowd indicating the rank of its occupant. Then the quick “present arms” of the sentry told of some general officer; while, at intervals, the “turn out” of the whole guard denoted the arrival of a royal prince. Ambassadors and ministers, chamberlains and chancellors, the dignitaries of the realm, the “Hautes Charges” of the Court, – all came in crowds to present their respects to the Gräfin, for by this brief designation was she known from one end of Europe to the other.

Madame de Heidendorf held a levée, and none would absent themselves from so interesting an occasion.

It was the eve of a wonderful moment in Europe – it was the little lull that preceded the most terrific storm that ever overturned thrones and scattered dynasties – as these illustrious personages were met together, to interchange compliments, to lisp soft phrases of flattery, and discuss the high

claims of some aspirant for a ribbon or a cross, a “Red Eagle,” or a “Black” one. A few, more far-sighted than the rest, saw the cloud, not bigger than a man’s hand, in the distance. A few could hear the low rumblings that denoted the brooding hurricane; but even they thought “the thing would last their time.” And thus, with many a pleasant jest, they chatted over the events of the hour, praised the wisdom of kings, and laughed to scorn those vulgar teachers whose democratic theories were just beginning to be whispered about. Some were young, buoyant, and hopeful, ready to shed the last drop for the principles they professed; others were old gray-headed men, tried servants of Monarchy for half a century. But all were like-minded, and self-gratulation and compliment was the order of the day. Leaving them thus to such pleasant converse, where the clank of jewelled swords or the tap of a diamond snuff-box formed the meet accompaniments of the themes, we turn once more to her in whose fate we are more deeply interested.

Twice had she rung the bell to ask if the messenger had not returned. At last he came; but there was “no answer to her note.” Her impatience became extreme. She ordered the servant who carried the note to appear before her; questioned him closely as to whether he had taken it, and the reply he had received. A soldier had said, “Gut!” and shut the door. Poor Kate! It was her first lesson in “soldier laconics,” and to say truly, she did not take it well. The “Princesse de Midchekoff” might have been treated with more deference. She was passing a mirror as the thought struck her, and her mien and air gave support to the belief; nor could she restrain the sense of admiration, half tinged with shame, her own beauty evoked.

“There is a soldier here, Madame,” said a servant, “who has a letter he will not deliver except into your own hands.”

“Admit him – at once,” said she, impatiently; and as she spoke the soldier stepped forward, and drawing himself up, carried his hand to the salute, while, presenting a letter, he said, “From the Field-Marshal von Auersberg.”

Kate scarcely looked at the bearer, but hastily tore open the square-shaped epistle.

“You need not wait,” said she to the servant; and then turning to the letter, read, —

“Madame la Princesse and beloved Niece, – It was with – to me of late years – a rare satisfaction that I read the not the less affectionate that they were polite lines you vouchsafed to inscribe to me, an old and useless but not forgotten servant of an Imperial master. Immediately on perusing the aforesaid so-called note, I despatched my adjutant to the head-quarters of the Franz Carl, to obtain – no service rules to the contrary forbidding, nor any default’s punishment in any wise preventing – a day’s furlough for the Cadet von Dalton – ”

“What regiment is yours?” said Kate, hastily, to the soldier.

“Franz Carl Infanterie, Highness,” said the youth, respectfully, using the title he had heard assumed by the servant.

“Do you know many of your comrades, – among the cadets, I mean?”

“There are but seven in the battalion, Highness, and I know them all.”

“Is Von Dalton an acquaintance of yours?”

“I am Von Dalton, Highness,” said the youth, while a flush of surprise and pleasure lighted up his handsome features.

“Frank! Frank!” cried she, springing towards him with open arms; and ere he could recognize her, clasping him round the neck.

“Is this real? Is this a dream? Are you my own sister Kate?” cried the boy, almost choked with emotion. “And how are you here? and how thus?” and he touched the robe of costly velvet as he spoke.

“You shall know all, dear, dear Frank. You shall hear everything when the joy of this meeting will let me speak.”

“They call you Highness; and how handsome you’ve grown!”

“Have I, Frank?” said she, pressing him down to a seat beside her, while, with hands interclasped, they sat gazing on each other.

“I am only beginning to remember you,” said he, slowly. “You never used to wear your hair in long ringlets thus. Even your figure is changed; you are taller, Kate.”

“It is the mere difference of dress, Frank,” said she, blushing with conscious pride.

“No, no; you are quite changed. Even as I sit here beside you, I feel I know not what of shame at my daring to be so near – ”

“So great a lady, you would say, dear Frank,” said she, laughing. “Poor boy, if you knew – ” She stopped, and then, throwing her arms around his neck, went on rapidly: “But, my own dear brother, tell me of yourself: are you happy; do you like the service; are they kind to you; is Uncle Stephen as we hoped he should be?”

“My story is soon told, Kate,” said he; “I am where I was the day I entered the army. I should have been made a corporal – ”

“A corporal!” cried Kate, laughing.

“A good thing it is, too,” said the youth. “No guards to mount, no fatigue duty, neither night patrol nor watch, and four kreutzers extra pay.”

“Poor dear boy!” cried she, kissing his forehead, while she gazed on him with a compassionate affection that spoke a whole world of emotion.

“But tell me of yourself, Kate. Why do they call you the Princess?”

“Because I am married, Frank, – that is, I am betrothed, and will soon be married.”

“And when did this occur? Tell me everything,” cried he, impatiently.

“You shall know all, dearest Frank. You have heard how Lady Hester Onslow carried me away with her to Italy. Nelly has told you how we were living in Florence, – in what splendor and festivity; our palace frequented by all the great and distinguished of every country, – French and German, and Spanish and Russian.”

“I hate the Russians; but go on,” said the boy, hastily.

“But why hate the Russians, Frank?” asked she, reddening as she spoke.

“They are false-hearted and treacherous. See how they have driven the Circassians into a war, to massacre them; look how they are goading on the Poles to insurrection. Ay, they say that they have emissaries at this moment in Hungary on the same errand. I detest them.”

“This may be their state policy, Frank; but individually – ”

“They are no better; Walstein knows them well.”

“And who is Walstein, Frank?”

“The finest fellow in the service; the one I would have wished you married to, Kate, above all the world. Think of a colonel of hussars at eight-and-twenty, so handsome, so brave, and such a rider. You shall see him, Kate!”

“But it’s too late, Frank,” said she, laughing; “You forget it’s too late!”

“Ah! so it is,” sighed the boy, seriously. “I often feared this,” muttered he, after a pause. “Nelly’s letters told me as much, and I said to myself, ‘It will be too late.’”

“Then Nelly has told you all, perhaps?” said she.

“Not everything, nor, indeed, anything at all very distinctly. I could only make out what seemed to be her own impressions, for they appeared mere surmises.”

“And of what sort were they?” asked Kate, curiously.

“Just what you would suspect from her. Everlasting fears about temptations and trials, and so forth, continually praying that your heart might resist all the flatteries about you. The old story about humility. I thought to myself, ‘If the lesson be not more needful to Kate than to me, she runs no great risk, after all!’ for I was also warned about the seductions of the world! a poor cadet, with a few kreutzers a day, told not to be a Sybarite! Returning wet through from a five hours’ patrol, to burnish accoutrements in a cold, damp barrack, and then exhorted against the contamination of low

society, when all around me were cursing the hardships they lived in, and execrating the slavery of the service!”

“Our dearest Nelly knows so little of the world,” said Kate, as she threw a passing glance at herself in the mirror, and arranged the fall of a deep fringe of gold lace which was fastened in her hair.

“She knows nothing of it,” said the boy, adjusting his sword-knot. “She thought our hussars wore white dolmans, and carried straight swords like the cuirassiers.”

“And the dear, simple creature asked me, in one of her letters, if I ever wore wild-flowers in my hair now, as I used to do long ago,” said Kate, stealing another glance at the glass. “Flowers are pretty things in the head when rubies make the pinks, and the dewdrops are all diamonds.”

Frank looked at her as she said this, and for the first time saw the proud elation her features assumed when excited by a theme of vanity.

“You are greatly changed, dearest Kate,” said he, thoughtfully.

“Is it for the worse, Frank?” said she, half coquettishly.

“Oh! as to beauty, you are a thousand times handsomer,” cried the boy, with enthusiasm. “I know not how, but every expression seems heightened, every feature more elevated; your air and gesture, your very voice, that once I thought was music itself, is far sweeter and softer.”

“What a flatterer!” said she, patting his cheek.

“But then, Kate,” said he, more gravely, “have these fascinations cost nothing? Is your heart as simple? Are your affections as pure? Ah! you sigh – and what a heavy sigh, too! Poor, poor Kate!”

And she laid her head upon his shoulder, while the heaving swell of her bosom told what sorrow the moment was costing her.

“Nelly, then, told you of my betrothal?” whispered she, in a weak, faint voice.

“No; I knew nothing of that. She told me all about the life you were leading; the great people with whom you were intimate; and bit by bit, a hint, some little allusion, would creep out as to the state of your heart. Perhaps she never meant it, or did not know it; but I remarked, in reading her letters over and over, – they were the solace of many a weary hour, – that one name recurred so often in connection with yours, you must have frequently referred to him yourself, for in each extract from your letters I saw the name.”

“This was strange. It must have been through inadvertence,” said she, musingly. “I thought I had scarcely spoken of him.”

“See how your hand told truth, even against your consciousness,” said he, smiling.

Kate made no reply, but sat deep in thought.

“And is he here? When shall I see him?” asked Frank, impatiently.

“No, Frank. He is in Italy; he was detained there by business of importance. Besides, it is not etiquette that we should travel together. When the Emperor’s permission has been obtained – ”

“What Emperor?” asked Frank, in astonishment.

“Our Emperor – the Czar.”

“What have you, an English girl born, to do with the Czar?”

“The Prince, my future husband, is his subject.”

“Why, there is no end to this mystification,” cried the boy, impatiently. “How can an English soldier be a Russian Prince?”

“I don’t understand you, Frank. Prince Midchekoff is a Russian by birth.”

“So that you are married to a Russian,” said he, in a voice of deep emotion, “and all this time I have been fancying my brother-in-law an Englishman. I thought it was this same George – George Onslow.”

A heavy, dull sound startled him as he said this. It was Kate, who had fallen back, fainting, on the sofa. It was long before, with all Frank’s efforts at restoration, she came to herself; and even when consciousness returned, tears flowed from her eyes and coursed down her cheeks copiously, as she lay speechless and motionless.

“My own poor Kate, my poor, dear sister!” were all that Frank could say, as he held her cold, clammy hand within his own; and, with an almost breaking heart, gazed on her pale features. It was so like death! “And might not death be better?” thought he, as he travelled over in his mind the story, of whose secret he was now possessed. How differently did he judge all Nelly’s counsels *now*! In what a changed spirit did he think of that wisdom which, but a few minutes back, he had sneered at! “And so it is,” muttered he. “If we who are born to humble fortunes would cherish ambition, we must pay for it with our hearts’ blood. Nelly was right; she often said so. Over and over again did she tell me, ‘goodness is the only safe road to greatness.’ Oh that one so beautiful as this should have missed the path!” And, sobbing violently, he kissed her hand, and watered it with his tears.

“Frank, you are with me, – you ‘ll not leave me,” said she, faintly, as she opened her eyes and stared in bewilderment around her. “I remember everything now – everything,” said she, with an emphasis on the last word. “This is Vienna: I recollect all. Ring that bell, Frank: let Nina come to me, but don’t go away; be sure not to go.”

Nina soon made her appearance, and with a look of half surprise, half admiration at the handsome soldier, assisted Kate to arise.

“I’ll be back presently, Frank,” said she, with a faint smile, and left the room. And the youth, overcome by emotion, sat down and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER VIII. PRIESTLY COUNSELS

Frank was so full of his own reflections that he almost forgot his sister's absence; nor did he notice how the time went over, when he heard the sound of voices and the noise of a door closing; and, on looking up, perceived a handsome man, something short of middle-aged, who, dressed in the deep black of a priest, wore a species of blue silk collar, the mark of a religious order. His features were perfectly regular, and their expression the most bland and courteous it was possible to imagine. There was a serene dignity, too, in his gait, as he came forward, that showed how thoroughly at home he felt on the soft carpet, and in the perfumed atmosphere of a drawing-room.

Bowing twice to Frank, he saluted him with a smile, so gentle and so winning, that the boy almost felt as if they had been already acquainted.

"I have come," said the priest, "to pay my respects to the Princesse de Midchekoff, and, if my eyesight is not playing me false, I have the honor to recognize her brother."

Frank blushed with pleasure as he bowed an assent.

"May I anticipate the kindness – which your sister would not refuse me," continued he, "and introduce myself. You may, perhaps, have heard of the Abbé D'Esmonde?"

"Repeatedly," cried Frank, taking the proffered hand in his own. "Nelly spoke of you in almost every letter. You were always so kind to Kate in Italy."

"How amply am I recompensed, were not the pleasure of knowing Miss Dalton a sufficient reward in itself. It is rare to find that combination of excellence which can command all the homage of fashion, and yet win the approbation of a poor priest."

There was a humility, deep enough to be almost painful, in the tone in which these words were uttered; but Frank had little time to dwell on them, for already the Abbé had taken a seat on the sofa beside him, and was deep in the discussion of all Kate's attractions and merits.

There was a sincerity, an ardor of admiration, chastened only by the temper of his sacred character, that delighted the boy. If allusion were made to her beauty, it was only to heighten the praise he bestowed on her for other gifts, and display the regulated action of a mind proof against every access of vanity. Her correct judgment, her intuitive refinement, the extreme delicacy of her sensibilities, – these were the themes he dwelt upon, and Frank felt that they must be rare gifts indeed, when the very description of them could be so pleasurable.

From what the Abbé said, so far from her marriage with the great Russian being a piece of fortune, she had but to choose her position amid the first houses of Europe.

"It was true," he added, "that the 'Midchekoff's' wealth was like royalty, and as he united to immense fortune great claims of personal merit, the alliance had everything to recommend it."

"And this is so?" cried Frank, eagerly. "The Prince is a fine fellow?"

"Generous and munificent to an extent almost fabulous," said D'Esmonde, who seemed rather to resume his own train of thought than reply to Frank's question. "The splendor of his life has already canonized a proverb."

"But his temper – his manner – his disposition?"

"Like all his countrymen, he is reserved, almost cold to strangers; his intimates, however, talk of him as frankness and candor itself. Even on political themes, where Russians are usually most guarded, he gives his opinions freely and manfully, and, strange enough too, with a liberality which, though common enough in our country, must be very rare indeed in his."

"That is strange!" said Frank, thoughtfully.

"Yes," said D'Esmonde, dropping into the tone of one who insensibly poured out his inmost thoughts in soliloquizing, – "Yes, he feels, what we all do, that this state of things cannot last, – disparity of condition may become too palpable and too striking. The contrast between affluence and

misery may display itself too offensively! Men may one day or other refuse to sign a renewal of the bond of servitude, and then – and then – ”

“A civil war, I suppose,” cried Frank, quietly; “but the troops will always give them a lesson.”

“Do you think so, my dear young friend?” said the Abbé, affectionately; “do you not rather think that soldiers will begin to learn that they are citizens, and that, when forging fetters for others, the metal can be fashioned into chains for themselves?”

“But they have an oath,” said the boy; “they ‘ve sworn to their allegiance.”

“Very true, so they have; but what is the oath? – the one half of the compact which cannot be supposed binding when the other half be broken. Let the social policy of a government fail in its great object, – the happiness of a people; let a whole nation gradually cease to enjoy the advantages for the sake of which they assumed the responsibilities and ties of family; let them day-by-day fall lower in the scale of civilization and comfort, and after surrendering this privilege to-day, and that to-morrow, at last take their stand on the very verge of the precipice, with nothing but abject slavery beneath, – what would you say of the order to charge them with the bayonet, even though the formality of a recruiting oath should seem to warrant the obedience?”

“I ‘d do it; if I was ordered,” said Frank, sternly.

“I don’t think you would,” said D’Esmonde, smiling. “I read your nature differently. I can trace, even in the flashing of your eye this instant, the ambition of a bold and energetic spirit, and that when the moment came you would embrace the losing cause, with all its perils, rather than stand by tyranny, in all its strength. Besides, remember, this is not the compact under which you entered the service, although it might, under certain peculiar circumstances, appeal to your sense of duty. An army is not – at least it ought not to be – a ‘gendarmerie.’ Go forth to battle against the enemies of your country, carry the flag of your Vaterland into the plains of France, plant the double eagle once more in the Place da Carrousel, – even aggressive war has its glorious compensations in deeds of chivalry and heroism – But here is the Princesse,” said the Abbé, rising, and advancing courteously towards her.

“The Abbé D’Esmonde!” cried Kate, with an expression of delight, as she held out her hand, which the priest pressed to his lips with all the gallantry of a courtier. “How pleasant to see the face of a friend in this strange land!” said she. “Abbé, this is my brother Frank, of whom you have heard me talk so often.”

“We are acquaintances already,” said D’Esmonde, passing his arm within the soldier’s; “and albeit our coats are not of the same color, I think many of our principles are.”

A few moments saw him seated between the brother and sister on the sofa, recounting the circumstances of his journey, and detailing, for Kate’s amusement, the latest news of Florence.

“Lady Hester is much better in health and spirits, too,” said the Abbé; “the disastrous circumstances of fortune would seem to have taken a better turn; at least, it is probable that Sir Stafford’s losses will be comparatively slight. I believe her satisfaction on this head arises entirely from feeling that no imputation of altered position can now be alleged as the reason for her change of religion.”

“And has she done this?” asked Kate, with a degree of anxiety; for she well knew on what feeble grounds Lady Hester’s convictions were usually built..

“Not publicly; she waits for her arrival at Rome, to make her confession at the shrine of St. John of Lateran. Her doubts, however, have all been solved, – her reconciliation is perfect.”

“Is she happy? Has she found peace of mind at last?” asked Kate, timidly.

“On this point I can speak with confidence,” said D’Esmonde, warmly; and at once entered into a description of the pleasurable impulse a new train of thoughts and impressions had given to the exhausted energies of a “fine lady’s” life. It was so far true, indeed, that for some days back she had never known a moment of *ennui*. Surrounded by sacred emblems and a hundred devices of religious association, she appeared to herself as if acting a little poem of life, wherein a mass of amiable qualities, of which she knew nothing before, were all developing themselves before her. And

what between meritorious charities, saintly intercessions, visits to shrines, and decorations of altars, she had not an instant unoccupied; it was one unceasing round of employment; and with prayers, bouquets, lamps, confessions, candles, and penances, the day was even too short for its duties.

The little villa of La Rocca was now a holy edifice. The drawing-room had become an oratory; a hollow-cheeked "Seminariste," from Como, had taken the place of the Maestro di Casa. The pages wore a robe like acolytes, and even Albert Jekyll began to fear that a costume was in preparation for himself, from certain measurements that he had observed taken with regard to his figure.

"My time is up," said Frank, hastily, as he arose to go away.

"You are not about to leave me, Frank?" said Kate.

"Yes, I must; my leave was only till four o'clock, as the Field-Marshal's note might have shown you; but I believe you threw it into the fire before you finished it."

"Did I, really? I remember nothing of that. But, stay, and I will write to him. I'll say that I have detained you."

"But the service, Kate dearest! My sergeant – my over-lieutenant – my captain – what will they say? I may have to pass three days in irons for the disobedience."

"Modern chivalry has a dash of the treadmill through it," said D'Esmonde, sarcastically; and the boy's cheek flushed as he heard it. The priest, however, had already turned away, and, walking into the recess of a window, left the brother and sister free to talk unmolested.

"I scarcely like him, Kate," whispered Frank.

"You scarcely know him yet," she said, with a smile. "But when can you come again to me, – to-morrow^ early?"

"I fear not. We have a parade and a field-inspection, and then 'rapport' at noon."

"Leave it to me, then, dear Frank," said she, kissing him; "I must try if I cannot succeed with the 'Field' better than you have done."

"There's the recall-bugle," cried the boy, in terror; and, snatching up his cap, he bounded from the room at once.

"A severe service, – at least, one of rigid discipline," said D'Esmonde, with a compassionating expression of voice. "It is hard to say whether it works for good or evil, repressing the development of every generous impulse, as certainly as it restrains the impetuous passions of youth."

"True," said Kate, pointedly; "there would seem something of priestcraft in their *régime*. The individual is nothing, the service everything."

"Your simile lacks the great element, – force of resemblance, Madame," said D'Esmonde, with a half smile. "The soldier has not, like the priest, a grand sustaining hope, a glorious object before him. He knows little or nothing of the cause in which his sword is drawn; his sympathies may even be against his duty. The very boy who has just left us, – noble-hearted fellow that he is, – what strange wild notions of liberty has he imbibed! how opposite are all his speculations to the stern calls of the duty he has sworn to discharge!"

"And does he dare –"

"Nay, Madame, there was no indiscretion on his part; my humble walk in life has taught me that if I am excluded from all participation in the emotions which sway my fellow-men, I may at least study them as they arise, watch them in their infancy, and trace them to their fruit of good or evil. Do not fancy, dear lady, that it is behind the grating of the confessional only that we read men's secrets. As the physician gains his knowledge of anatomy from the lifeless body, so do we learn the complex structure of the human heart in the deathlike stillness of the cell, with the penitent before us. But yet all the knowledge thus gained is but a step to something further. It is while reading the tangled story of the heart, – its struggles, its efforts, the striving after good here, the inevitable fall back to evil there, the poor, weak attempt at virtue, the vigorous energy of vice, – it is hearing this sad tale from day to day, learning, in what are called the purest natures, how deep the well of corruption lies, and that not one generous thought, one noble aspiration, or one holy desire rises unalloyed by some

base admixture of worldly motive. It is thus armed we go forth into the world, to fight against the wiles and seductions of life. How can we be deceived by the blandishments that seduce others? What avail to us those pretentious displays of self-devotion, those sacrifices of wealth, those proud acts of munificence which astonish the world, but of whose secret springs we are conversant? What wonder, then, if I have read the artless nature of a boy like that, or see in him the springs of an ambition he knows not of himself? Nay, it would be no rash boast to say that I have deciphered more complicated inscriptions than those upon his heart I have traced some upon his sister's!" The last three words he uttered with a slow and deep enunciation, leaving a pause between each, and bending on her a look of intense meaning.

Kate's cheek became scarlet, then pale, and a second time she flushed, till neck and shoulders grew crimson together.

"You have no confidences to make me, my dear, dear child," said D'Esmonde, as, taking her hand, he pressed her down on a sofa beside him. "Your faltering lips have nothing to articulate, – no self-repinings, no sorrows to utter; for I know them all!" He paused for a few seconds, and then resumed: "Nor have you to fear me as a stern or a merciless judge. Where there is a sacrifice, there is a blessing!"

Kate held down her head, but her bosom heaved, and her frame trembled with emotion.

"Your motives," resumed he, "would dignify even a rasher course. I know the price at which you have bartered happiness, – not your own only, but another's with it!"

She sobbed violently, and pressed her hands over her face.

"Poor, poor fellow!" cried he, as if borne away by an impulse of candor that would brook no concealment, "how I grieved to see him, separated, as we were, by the wide and yawning gulf between us, giving himself up to the very recklessness of despair, now cursing the heartless dissipation in which his life was lost, now accusing himself of golden opportunities neglected, bright moments squandered, petty misunderstandings exaggerated into dislikes, the passing coldness of the moment exalted into a studied disdain! We were almost strangers to each other before, – nay, I half fancied that he kept aloof from me. Probably," – here D'Esmonde smiled with a bland dignity, – "probably he called me a 'Jesuit,' – that name so full of terror to good Protestant ears; but, on his sick-bed, as he lay suffering and in solitude, his faculties threw off the deceptive influences of prejudice; he read me then more justly; he saw that I was his friend. Hours upon hours have we passed talking of you; the theme seemed to give a spring to an existence from which, till then, all zest of life had been withdrawn. I never before saw as much of passion, with a temper so just and so forgiving. He needed no aid of mine to read your motives truly. 'It is not for herself that she has done this,' were words that he never ceased to utter. He knew well the claims that family would make on you, the heartrending appeals from those you could not but listen to! 'Oh! if I could but think that she will not forget me; that some memory of me will still linger in her mind!' – this was his burning prayer, syllabled by lips parched by the heat of fever; and when I told him to write to you – "

"To write to me!" cried she, catching his arm, while her cheeks trembled with intense agony; "You did not give such counsel?"

"Not alone that," said D'Esmonde, calmly, "but promised that I would myself deliver the letter into your hands. Is martyrdom less glorious than a cry of agony escapes the victim, or that his limbs writhe as the flame wraps round them? Is self-sacrifice to be denied the sorrowful satisfaction to tell its woes? I bade him write because it would be good for him and for you alike."

She stared eagerly, as if to ask his meaning.

"Good for both," repeated he, slowly. "Love will be, to him, a guide-star through life, leading him by paths of high and honorable ambition; to you it will be the consolation of hours that even splendor will not enliven. Believe me," – here he raised his voice to a tone of command and authority, – "believe me that negation is the lot of all. Happiest they who only suffer in their affections! And what is the purest of all love? Is it not that the devotee feels for his protecting saint, – that sense

of ever-present care, that consciousness of a watching, unceasing affection, that neither slumbers nor wearies, following us in our joy, beside us in our afflictions? Some humble effigy, some frail representation, is enough to embody this conception; but its essence lies in the heart of hearts! Such a love as this – pure, truthful, and enduring – may elevate the humblest life into heroism, and throw a sun-gleam over the dreariest path of destiny. The holy bond that unites the grovelling nature below with glory above, has its humble type on earth in those who, separated by fate, are together in affection. I bade him write to you a few lines; he was too weak for more; indeed, his emotion almost made the last impossible. I pressed him, however, to do it, and pledged myself to place them in your hands; my journey hither had no other object.” As he spoke, he took forth a small sealed packet, and gave it to Kate, whose hands trembled as she took it.

“I shall spend some days in Vienna,” said he, rising to take leave; “pray let me have a part of each of them with you. I have much to say to you, and of other matters than those we have now spoken.” And kissing her hand with a respectful devotion, the Abbé withdrew, without ever once raising his eyes towards her.

Sick with sorrow and humiliation, – for such she acutely felt, – Kate Dalton rose and retired to her room. “Tell Madame de Heidendorf, Nina,” said she, “that I feel tired to-day, and beg she will excuse my not appearing at dinner.”

Nina courtesied her obedience, but it was easy to see that the explanation by no means satisfied her, and that she was determined to know something more of the origin of her young mistress’s indisposition.

“Madame knows that the Archduke is to dine here.”

“I know it,” said Kate, peevishly, and as if desirous of being left in quiet.

Nina again courtesied, but in the brilliant flashing of her dark eyes it was plain to mark the consciousness that some secret was withheld from her. The *soubrette* class are instinctive readers of motives; “their only books are ‘ladies’ looks,” but they con them to perfection. It was, then, with a studied pertinacity that Nina proceeded to arrange drawers and fold dresses, and fifty other similar duties, the discharge of which she saw was torturing her mistress.

“I should wish to be alone, Nina, and undisturbed,” said Kate, at last, her patience being entirely exhausted.

Nina made her very deepest reverence, and withdrew.

Kate waited for a few seconds, till all sound of her retiring steps had died away, then arose, and locked the door.

She was alone; the packet which the Abbé had delivered lay on the table before her; she bent down over it, and wept. The utter misery of sorrow is only felt where self-reproach mingles with our regrets. All the pangs of other misfortunes are light in comparison with this. The irrevocable past was her own work; she knew it, and cried till her very heart seemed bursting.

CHAPTER IX. SECRETS OF HEAD AND HEART

I must ask of my reader to leave this chamber, where, overwhelmed by her sorrows, poor Kate poured out her grief in tears, and follow me to a small but brilliantly lighted apartment, in which a little party of four persons was seated, discussing their wine, and enjoying the luxury of their cigars. Be not surprised when we say that one of the number was a lady. Madame de Heidendorf, however, puffed her weed with all the zest of a smoker; the others were the Archduke Ernest, a plain, easy-tempered looking man, in the gray undress of an Austrian General, the Foreign Minister, Count Nörinberg, and our old acquaintance, the Abbé D'Esmonde.

The table, besides the usual ornaments of a handsome dessert, was covered with letters, journals, and pamphlets, with here and there a colored print in caricature of some well-known political personage. Nothing could be more easy and unconstrained than the air and bearing of the guests. The Archduke sat with his uniform coat unbuttoned, and resting one leg upon a chair before him. The Minister tossed over the books, and brushed off the ashes of his cigar against the richly damasked table-cloth; while even the Abbé seemed to have relaxed the smooth urbanity of his face into a look of easy enjoyment. Up to this moment the conversation had been general, the principal topics being the incidents of the world of fashion, the flaws and frivolities, the mishaps and misadventures of those whose names were familiar to his Imperial Highness, and in whose vicissitudes he took the most lively interest. These, and a stray anecdote of the turf in England, were the only subjects he cared for, hating politics and State affairs with a most cordial detestation. His presence, however, was a compliment that the Court always paid "the Countess," and he submitted to his torn of duty manfully.

Deeply involved in the clouds of his cigar-smoke, and even more enveloped in the misty regions of his own reveries, he sipped his wine in silence, and heard nothing of the conversation about him. The Minister was then perfectly free to discuss the themes most interesting to him, and learn whatever he could of the state of public opinion in Italy.

"You are quite right, Abbé," said he, with a sage shake of the head. "Small concessions, petty glimpses of liberty, only give a zest for more enlarged privileges. There is nothing like a good flood of popular anarchy for creating a wholesome disgust to freedom. There must be excesses!"

"Precisely so, sir," said the Abbé. "There can be no question of an antidote if there has been no poisoning."

"Ay; but may not this system be pushed too far? Is not his Holiness already doing so?"

"Some are disposed to think so, but I am not of the number," said D'Esmonde. "It is necessary that he should himself be convinced that the system is a bad one; and there is no mode of conviction so palpable as by a personal experience. Now, this he will soon have. As yet, he does not see that every step in political freedom is an advance towards the fatal heresy that never ceases its persecutions of the Church. Not that our Revolutionists care for Protestantism or the Bible either; but, by making common cause with those who do, see what a large party in England becomes interested for their success. The right of judgment conceded in religious matters, how can you withhold it in political ones? The men who brave the Church will not tremble before a cabinet. Now the Pope sees nothing of this; he even mistakes the flatteries offered to himself for testimonies of attachment to the Faith, and all those kneeling hypocrites who implore his blessing he fancies are faithful children of Rome. He must be awakened from this delusion; but yet none save himself can dispel it. He is obstinate and honest."

"If the penalty were to be his own alone, it were not so much matter," said the Minister; "but it will cost a revolution."

"Of course it will; but there is time enough to prepare for it."

"The state of the Milanais is far from satisfactory," said the Minister, gravely.

“I know that; but a revolt of a prison always excuses double irons,” said D’Esmonde, sarcastically.

“Tell him of Sardinia, Abbé,” said Madame de Heidendorf.

“Your real danger is from that quarter,” said D’Esmonde. “There is a growing spirit of independence there, – a serious desire for free institutions, wide apart from the wild democracy of the rest of Italy. This is a spirit you cannot crush; but you can do better, – you can corrupt it. Genoa is a hotbed of Socialist doctrine; the wildest fanaticism of the ‘Reds’ is there triumphant, and our priests are manfully aiding the spread of such opinions. They have received orders to further these notions; and it is thus, and by the excesses consequent on this, you will succeed in trampling down that moderated liberty which is the curse that England is destined to disseminate amongst us. It is easy enough to make an excited people commit an act of indiscretion, and then, with public opinion on your side – ”

“How I detest that phrase!” said Madame de Heidendorf; “it is the lowest cant of the day.”

“The thing it represents is not to be despised, Madame,” said the Abbé.

“These are English notions,” said she, sneeringly.

“They will be Russian ones yet, depend upon it, Madame.”

“I ‘d rather know what a few men of vast fortune, like Midchekoff, for instance, think, than have the suffrages of half the greasy mobs of Europe.”

“By the way,” said the Minister, “what is he doing? Is it true that he is coquetting with Liberals and Fourierists, and all that?”

“For the moment he is,” said Madame de Heidendorf; “and two or three of the popularity-seeking sovereigns have sent him their decorations, and if he does not behave better he will be ordered home.”

“He is of great use in Italy,” said the Minister.

“True; but he must not abuse his position.”

“He is just vain enough to lend himself to a movement,” said D’Esmonde; “but he shall be watched.”

These last words were very significantly uttered.

“You know the Princess, Abbé?” asked the Minister, with a smile; and another smile, as full of meaning, replied to the question.

“She’s pretty, ain’t she?” asked the Archduke.

“Beautiful is the word, sir; but if your Imperial Highness would like to pass judgment personally, I ‘ll beg of her to come down to the drawing-room.”

“Of all things, most kind of you to make the offer,” said he, rising and arranging his coat and sword-knot into some semblance of propriety, while Madame de Heidendorf rang the bell, and despatched a messenger to Kate with the request.

Nina was overjoyed at the commission intrusted to her. Since Kate’s peremptory order, she had not ventured to intrude herself upon her; but now, armed with a message, she never hesitated about invading the precincts of that silent chamber, at whose door she often stood in doubt and speculation.

She tapped gently at the door; there was no answer. A second summons was alike unrequied to, and Nina bent down her head to listen. There were long-drawn breathings, like sleep; but a heavy sigh told that the moments were those of waking sorrow. Cautiously turning the handle of the door, without noise, she opened it and passed in. The room was shrouded in a dim half-light, and it was not till after the lapse of some seconds that Nina could distinguish the form of her young mistress, as, with her head buried in her hands, she sat before a table on which lay an open letter.

So absorbed was Kate in grief that she heard nothing, and Nina approached her, slowly, till at last she stood directly behind her, fixedly regarding the heaving figure, the dishevelled hair, and the trembling hands that seemed to clutch with eagerness some object within their grasp. Kate suddenly started, and pushing back her hair from her eyes, seemed as if trying to collect her wandering thoughts.

Then, unclasping a case, she placed a miniature before her, and contemplated it attentively. Nina bent over her till she almost touched her in her eagerness. Had any one been there to have seen her features at the moment, they would have perceived the traits of intense and varied passion, surprise, rage, and jealousy, all struggling for the mastery. Her dark skin grew almost livid, and her black eyes glowed with anger; while, with a force like convulsion, she pressed her hands to her heart, as if to calm its beatings. A sea of stormy passions was warring within her, and in her changeful expression might be seen the conflict of her resolves. At last, she appeared to have decided; for with noiseless steps she gradually retreated toward the door, her eyes all the while steadily fixed on her mistress.

It seemed to require no slight effort to repress the torrent of rage within her; for even at the door she stood irresolute for a moment, and then, softly opening it, withdrew. Once outside, her pent-up passions found vent, and she sobbed violently. Her mood was, however, more of anger than of sorrow, and there was an air of almost insolent pride in the way she now knocked, and then, without waiting for reply, entered the room.

“Madame de Heidendorf requests that the Princess will appear in the drawing-room,” said she, abruptly, and confronting Kate’s look of confusion with a steadfast stare.

“Say that I am indisposed, Nina, – that I feel tired and unwell,” said Kate, timidly.

“There is an Archduke, Madame.”

“What care I for an Archduke, Nina?” said Kate, trying to smile away the awkwardness of her own disturbed manner.

“I have always believed that great folk liked each other,” said Nina, sarcastically.

“Then I must lack one element of that condition, Nina,” said Kate, good-humoredly; “but pray make my excuses, – say anything you like so that I may be left in quiet.”

“How delightful Madame’s reveries must be, when she attaches such value to them!”

“Can you doubt it, Nina?” replied Kate, with a forced gayety. “A betrothed bride ought to be happy; you are always telling me so. I hear of nothing from morn till night but of rich caskets of gems and jewels; you seem to think that diamonds would throw a lustre over any gloom.”

“And would they not?” cried Nina, passionately “Has not the brow nobler and higher thoughts when encircled by a coronet like this? Does not the heart beat with greater transport beneath gems like these?” And she opened case after case of sparkling jewels as she spoke, and spread them before Kate, on the table.

“And yet I have learned to look on them calmly,” said Kate, with an expression of proud indifference.

“Does not that dazzle you?” said Nina, holding up a cross of rose diamonds.

“No!” said Kate, shaking her head.

“Nor that?” cried Nina, displaying a gorgeous necklace.

“Nor even that, Nina.”

“Is Madame’s heart so steeled against womanly vanities,” said Nina, quickly, while she threw masses of costly articles before her, “that not one throb, not one flush of pleasure, is called up at sight of these?”

“You see, Nina, that I can look on them calmly.”

“Then this, perchance, may move you!” cried Nina; and with a bound she sprang to the table at which Kate was seated, and, dashing the handkerchief away, seized the miniature, and held it up.

Kate uttered a shrill cry and fell back fainting. Nina gazed at her for a second or so with a look of haughty disdain, and sprinkling the pale features with a few drops of water, she turned away. With calm composure she replaced each precious gem within its case, laid the miniature once more beneath the handkerchief, and then left the room.

“Your Princess will not honor us, it seems, with her company,” said the Archduke, half in pique, as the messenger returned with Kate’s excuses; “and yet I looked for her coming to get rid of all the farrago of politics that you wise folk will insist upon talking.”

The Countess and the Minister exchanged most significant glances at this speech, while D'Esmonde politely assented to the remark, by adding something about the relaxation necessary to overwrought minds, and the need that princes should enjoy some repose as well as those of lower degree. "I can, however, assure your Imperial Highness," said he, "that this is no caprice of the young Princess. She is really far from well, and was even unable to receive her own relative this afternoon, the Count von Dalton."

"What, is old Auersberg a relative of hers?"

"An uncle, or a grand-uncle, – I forget which, sir."

"Then that wild youth in the Franz Carl must be a connection too?"

"The cadet is her brother, sir."

"Indeed! What an extravagant fellow it is! They say that, counting on being Auersberg's heir, he spends money in every possible fashion; and as the tradespeople take the succession on trust, his debts are already considerable. It was only yesterday his colonel spoke to me of sending him to the Banat, or some such place. His family must be rich, I suppose?"

"I believe quite the reverse, sir. Poor to indigence. Their entire hope is on the Count von Auersberg."

"He held a frontier command for many years, and must have saved money. But will he like to see it in hands like these?"

"I believe – at least so the story goes," said D'Esmonde, dropping his voice to a whisper, "that the boy's arguments have scarcely assisted his object in that respect. They say that he told the Count that in times like these no man's fortune was worth a year's purchase; that when monarchs were tottering and thrones rocking, it were better to spend one's means freely than to tempt pillage by hoarding it."

"Are these his notions?" cried the Archduke, in amazement

"Yes; the wildest doctrines of Socialism are his creed, – opinions, I grieve to say, more widely spread than any one supposes."

"How is this, then? I see the private regimental reports of every corps, I read the conduct-rolls of almost every company, and yet no hint of this disaffection has reached me."

"A priest could reveal more than an adjutant, sir," said the Abbé, smiling. "These youths who fancy themselves neglected, – who think their claims disregarded, – who, in a word, imagine that some small pretension, on the score of family, should be the spring of their promotion, are easily seduced into extravagant ideas about freedom and so forth."

"Austria is scarce the land for such fruit to ripen in," said the Archduke, laughing. "Let him try France, or the United States."

"Very true, your Highness," chimed in the Abbé; "but such boys ought to be watched, – their conduct inquired strictly into."

"Or better still, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the Archduke, sternly, "dismissed the service. I see no profit in retaining amongst us the seeds of this French malady."

"I believe your Highness takes the true view of the difficulty," said D'Esmonde, as though reflecting over it. "And yet you will be asked to make an officer of him in a day or two."

"An officer of this boy, and why, or by whom?"

"The Princess, his sister, will make the request; probably through Von Auersberg."

"But when I tell the Feld –"

"Ah, your Imperial Highness could not betray a confidence!" said D'Esmonde. "I have ventured to disclose to you what has come to my knowledge by means only accessible to myself; I therefore rely on your Highness not to divulge, however you may use it."

"He shall not continue to wear our cloth; that you may certainly rely on, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the Archduke, sternly.

“In any case, wait for his sister’s departure, sir,” said D’Esmonde, anxiously; “a few days or hours. As soon as this silly old lady has made up that budget of gossip and scandal she fancies to be political news, we ‘ll see her leave this, and then he can be dealt with as you think proper.”

The Archduke made no reply, – not seeming either to assent to or reject the counsel. “It would break the old Marshal’s heart,” said he, at last; “that gallant old soldier would never survive it.”

“A treason might, indeed, kill him,” said D’Esmonde. “But your Highness will anticipate exposure by dismissal – dismissal, peremptory and unexplained.”

Again the Archduke was silent, but his lowering brow and dark expression told that the subject was giving him deep and serious thought. “I paid no attention to your conversation this evening, Abbé,” said he, at last; “but it struck me, from a chance word here and there, that you suspect these same ‘Liberal’ notions are gaining ground.”

“Heresies against the Faith, sir, have begotten their natural offspring, heresies against the State; and Governments do not yet awaken to the fact that they who scorn the altar will not respect the throne. The whole force of what are called Liberal institutions has been to weaken the influence of the clergy; and yet it is precisely on that same influence you will have to fall back. It is beneath the solemn shadow of the Church you’ll seek your refuge yet!”

“No, no, father,” said the Archduke, with a laugh; “we have another remedy.”

“The mitre is stronger than the *mitraille*, after all,” said D’Esmonde, boldly. “Believe me, sir, that the solemn knell that tolls an excommunication will strike more terror through Christendom than all your artillery.”

Either the remark or the tone in which it was uttered was displeasing to the Prince; indeed, all the Abbe’s courtesy at times gave way to an almost impetuous boldness, which royalty never brooks, for he turned away haughtily, and joined the others at a distant part of the room.

There was something of scorn in the proud look which D’Esmonde gave after him, and then slipped from the chamber with noiseless step and disappeared. Inquiring the way to the Princess’s apartment, the Abbé slowly ascended the stairs, pondering deeply as he went. Nina was passing the corridor at the moment, and, supposing that he had mistaken the direction, politely asked if she could offer him any guidance. Scarcely noticing the questioner, he replied, —

“I was looking for the Princesse de Midchekoff’s apartments.”

“It is here, sir; but she is indisposed.”

“If you would say that the Abbé D’Esmonde – ”

He had got thus far when, lifting his eyes, his glance fell upon her features; and then, as if spell-bound, he stood silently gazing at her. Nina’s cheek grew crimson under the stare; but her eyes met his with unshaken firmness.

“If I were to disbelieve all probabilities,” said he, slowly, “I should say that I see an old friend before me. Are you not the daughter of Huertos, the Toridor of Seville?”

“Fra Eustace!” said Nina, stepping back and staring steadily at him.

“No longer so, Lola; I am the Abbé D’Esmonde now,” said he, while a faint flush tinged his pale features.

“And I am Nina, the ‘Cameriera,’” replied she, scornfully. “See how unequally fortune has dealt with us!”

D’Esmonde made a sign towards the door, which she at once understood and answered, —

“Yes, in the service of the Princess.”

“This is indeed a strange meeting, Lola.”

“Call me Nina,” said the girl, flushing, “or I shall remember old times, and my Spanish blood will little bear such memories.”

“Where can we talk together, Nina?”

“Come this way, holy father,” said she, with a half-sneering smile. “I suppose a poor girl may receive her confessor in her chamber.”

D'Esmonde walked after her without speaking. While crossing a gallery, she unlocked a door, and admitted him into a small but neatly furnished room.

"Dear Lola," said the priest, as, taking her hand, he looked affectionately at her, – "I must needs call you by the old name, – what turn of fortune has brought you here?"

"It is a question well becomes you," said the girl, releasing her hand from his grasp, and drawing herself proudly up. "You cut the bark adrift, and you wonder that it has become a wreck!"

"How this old warmth of temper recalls the past, and how I love you for it, as I grieve over it, Lola; but be calm, and tell me everything, just as you used to tell me years ago."

"Oh, if I had the same pure heart as then!" cried the girl, passionately. "Oh, if I could but shed tears, as once I did, over each slight transgression, and not have my spirit seared and hardened, as the world has made it!"

"We cannot carry the genial freshness of youth into the ripe years of judgment, Lola. Gifts decay, and others succeed them."

"No more of this casuistry. *You* are, I see, the same, whatever changes time may have made in *me*; but I have outlived these trickeries. Tell me, frankly, what do you want with me?"

"Must there needs be some motive of self-interest in renewing an old but interrupted friendship, Lola? You remember what we once were to each other?"

"Oh that I could forget it! – oh that I could wash out the thought, or even think it but a dream! But how can you recall these memories? If the sorrow be mine, is not the shame all yours?"

"The shame and the sorrow are alike mine," said D'Esmonde, in a voice of deep dejection, "*You* alone, of all the world, were ever able to shake within me the great resolves that in prayer and devotion I had formed. For you, Lola, I was, for a space, willing to resign the greatest cause that ever man engaged in. Ay, for love of *you*, I was ready to peril everything – even to my soul! Is not this enough for shame and sorrow too? Is not this humiliation for one who wears the robe that I do?"

"You were a student in those days," said Nina, with a sneering smile; "and I never heard you speak of all those dreadful sacrifices. You used to talk of leaving the college with a light heart. You spoke of the world as if you were impatient to mingle with it. You planned I know not how many roads to fortune and advancement. Among other careers, I remember" – and here she burst into a scornful laugh, that made the priest's cheek grow crimson with passion – "I remember how you hit upon one which speaks rather for your ardor than your prudence. Do you forget that you would be a Toridor, – you whose cheek grew pale and whose heart sickened as my father's horse lay embowelled in the ring, and who fainted outright when the bull's horns were driven into the barricade near you. You a Toridor! A Toridor should have courage!" And as she spoke, her eyes flashed with the fire of passion.

"Courage!" said the priest, in a voice almost guttural from emotion; "and is there no other courage than the vulgar defiance of personal danger, – the quality of the veriest savage and the merest brute in creation? Is there nothing more exalted in courage than to face bodily peril? Are all its instincts selfishness? What think you of the courage of him who, in all the conscious strength of intellect, with powers to win an upward way amongst the greatest and the highest, can stoop to a life of poverty and neglect, can give up all that men strive for, – home, affection, family, citizenship, – content to toil apart and alone, – to watch, to fast, and pray, and think, – ay, think till the very brain reels with labor, – and all this for a cause in which he is but a unit! Courage! Tell me not of courage beside that of him who dares to shake the strongest thrones, and convulses empires with his word, whose counsels brave the might of armies, and dare even kings to controvert; and, greatest of all, the courage that for a cause can risk salvation! Yes, Lola, he who to save others hazards his own eternity! Have I not done it?" cried he, carried away by an impetuous rush of feeling. "Have I not overborne the truth and sustained the falsehood? Have I not warped the judgments, and clouded the faculties, and misdirected the aspirations of many who came to me for counsel, knowing that if there might be evil now there would be good hereafter, and that for present and passing sorrow there would be a glorious day of rejoicing? To this end have I spoke Peace to the guilty man and Hope to the hardened!"

Not for him, nor for me, but for the countless millions of the Church, – for the mighty hosts who look to her for succor and consolation! This I call courage!”

And he drew himself proudly up, and folded his arms on his breast with an air of haughty composure; while the girl, awed by his manner, and subdued by the impetuosity of his speech, gazed at him in half fear and wonderment.

“Tell me of your father, Lola,” said D’Esmonde, in a low, soft voice, as he drew her low seat to his side.

“*He* was killed at Madrid; he died before the Queen!” said she, proudly.

“The death of a Toridor!” muttered the priest, mournfully.

“Yes, and Pueblos too, – he is dead!”

“Not the little child that I remember – ”

“The same. He grew up to be a fine man; some thought him handsomer than my father. My mother’s family would have made a priest of him, but he chose the prouder destiny.”

“I cannot think of him but as the child, – the little fellow who played about my knees; dressed like a matador, his long silky hair in a net.”

“Oh, do not – do not speak of him,” cried the girl, burying her face between her hands; “my heart will not bear those memories.”

The priest’s face was lighted up with a malevolent delight as he bent over her, as if revelling in the thought the emotions could call up.

“Poor little fellow!” said he, as if to himself. “How I remember his bolero that he danced for me.” He stopped, and she sobbed bitterly. “He said that Lola taught him.”

She looked up; the tears were fast coursing along her cheeks, which were pale as death.

“Eustace,” said she, tremulously, “these thoughts will drive me mad; my brain is reeling even now.”

“Let us talk of something else, then,” said he. “When did you leave the ‘Opera’ – and why?”

“How can you ask? you were at Seville at the time. Have you forgotten that famous, marriage, to which, by your persuasion, I consented; was this scheme only one of those unhappy events which are to be the seed of future good?”

The sneer made no impression on the priest, who calmly answered, “Even so, Lola.”

“What do you mean, sir?” cried she, angrily; “to what end am I thus? Was I so base born and so low? Was my lot in life so ignominious that I should not have raised my ambition above a fortune like this, – the waiting-woman of one whose birth is not better than my own?”

“You are right, Lola, – perfectly right; and with patience and prudence you will be her equal yet. Acton is an English noble – ”

“What care I for that?” said she, passionately; “the marriage was a counterfeit.”

“The marriage was a true and valid one.”

“And yet you yourself told me it was not binding.”

“I had my reasons for the deceit, Lola,” said he, persuasively. “You were deserted and desolate; such widowhood would have brought you to the grave with sorrow. It were better that you should strive against misery.”

“Even in shame?” asked she, scornfully.

“Even in shame, for the shame would be short-lived; but Lord Norwood is alive, and you are his wife.”

“Lord Norwood! I have heard that name so often,” said she, musingly.

“At Florence, of course, he was every night at the Mazzarini Palace; the same Gerald Acton you remember long ago.”

“And he is a lord, – an English noble?”

“And you are an English peeress, Lola. There is not a coronet more safe upon a titled head than I can make yours, – can and will make,” added he, slowly. “But you must be patient; I must now speak

to you, Lola, of themes in which you can take no interest, and subjects of which you know nothing. But listen to me attentively, and hear me; for fortune has not thus thrown us together without a meaning.

“The hour is come, Lola, when heretics and infidels have determined on an attack of our faith; not as they have hitherto attempted, and with such signal failure, by the weapons of controversy and discussion, but by brute force; by the might of millions driven to madness from want and misgovernment To avert this terrible calamity is now the unceasing thought of the Church. Some have counselled one thing, some another; some would go forth to the fight, trusting that, as of old, God would not forget his people; there are others who deem this course presumptuous and unwise. The hearts of kings are not as they once were, – in their confessors’ keeping. Our age and manners would send forth no crusade. The battle must be otherwise contested. You could not follow me, Lola, were I to tell you either of the perils or their antidotes. Enough that I say we must have trusty and faithful agents in every land of Europe, and in every rank in every people. From the secret whisperings of the Czar to the muttered discontent of the Irish peasant, we must know them all. To this end have we labored anxiously and eagerly for some time back, and already have we made great progress. From every Court of Europe we now receive tidings, and there is not a royal palace where our interests are unguarded. Some serve us for the glorious cause itself, some have their own price, some again are in our own hands from motives of self-interest or terror, but all are alike true. This Princess – this Dalton – I destined for a duty of the same nature. Married to a man of Midchekoff’s wealth and influence, she might have done good service, but I scarcely dare to trust her; even at the sacrifice of herself she might fail me, and, although in my power, I cannot count upon her. Think, then, of my joy at finding you, one on whose fidelity I may hazard life itself. You can be all to me, and a thousand times more than ever she could.”

“Your spy,” said the girl, steadily, but without the slightest semblance of anger.

“My friend, my counsellor, my correspondent, Lola.”

“And the price?”

“You may name it. If your heart be set on mere worldly distinction, I will prove your marriage, and although Norwood is not rich, his country never neglects the class he belongs to. Would you break the tie, the bond is in my keeping.”

“I never loved him,” cried she, passionately, “and you knew it. The marriage was one of those snares on which your mind never ceases to dwell – ”

“If you loved another, Lola – ?” said he, interrupting, and then waiting for her to finish her speech.

“And if I had,” burst she forth, “am I credulous enough to fancy that your word can reconcile every difference of rank and fortune, – that you can control destiny, and even coerce affection? No, no, Eustace; I have outlived all that!”

“Then were you wiser when you believed it,” said he, gravely. “Now for his name.”

There was a tone of almost commanding influence in which these last few words were uttered, and his dark full eyes were steadily fixed on her as he spoke them.

She hesitated to answer, and seemed to reflect.

“I ask no forced confession, Lola,” said he, proudly, and rising at the same time from his seat “In all the unreserve of our old affection, I told you *my* secret; *yours* is with yourself.”

“But can you – ” She stopped.

“I can, and I will aid you,” said he, finishing her sentence.

“There is the name, then!” cried she, as, with a passionate gesture, she drew a sealed letter from her bosom, and showed him the superscription.

D’Esmonde almost started; but, recovering himself in an instant, he said, —

“The address is not correct, Lola. It should be thus – ” And taking a pen, he drew it across the last line on the cover, and wrote, instead, “Dewanpore Barracks, Calcutta.” “We must talk together this evening,” said he, restoring the letter, and, without more, withdrew.

CHAPTER X. D'ESMONDE'S LETTER

It will spare the reader a somewhat lengthy digression if we give him a peep at an extract from a letter written at this period by the Abbé D'Esmonde to a friend and fellow priest in Ireland. It was written on the very evening whose events we have just mentioned, and when fresh from the scenes of which he speaks.

The name or circumstances of the Abbe's confidant have no interest for us; nor need we allude to him more particularly than by stating that he was one who took a prominent part in his country's politics, and was a well-known agitator, both in print and on the platform. The present moment might not be inopportune to show the injustice of that sneer so often passed upon men of this stamp, and which assumes that their whole lives are spent in the agitation of small and irritating questions of mere local interest, – the petty intrigues of a village or a hamlet, – and without knowledge or interest for those greater themes which stir the heart of all Europe. We must not, however, be led away from our purpose, but, leaving these inferences to our reader's appreciation, keep to the sober business of our task.

We have only to premise that D'Esmonde and his friend had been schoolfellows and college companions, and that the revelations made were in all the confidence of unbounded trust and security. Neither was the hazard of a post-office incurred, for the document was forwarded, with several letters from Rome, by a private hand, – a priest, who twice each year performed the journey on a similar errand, and – shall we startle our reader if we add, in a spirit apart from all the caprices of fiction – still travels on the same mission.

After some apology for the time the epistle would be on the road, seeing that it should first return to Rome ere it began its journey northward, D'Esmonde next alludes to some private and personal matters, and some individuals of their acquaintance, and then proceeds: —

“It is not without much inconvenience that I am here at this moment, but my presence was necessary to neutralize the influence of this troublesome old Countess, and who would fain stop, if she could, all these liberal movements ere they have developed their true meaning. You can have no idea how difficult is this task, nor with what persistent folly people go on repeating each other's ‘platitudes’ about ‘timely checks,’ ‘scotching the snake,’ and so forth. It is now upwards of half a century since Europe has seen a real political convulsion. A new lesson is wanting. I often used to hope that you of the West might be able to give it. I had great expectations of Chartism at one time. It possessed the due elements of mischief in abundance; it was infidel and hungry; but it wanted the great requisites, – determination and courage. The example must come from the Continent, and, in one respect, it is so much the better. Your home disturbers would be necessarily the enemies of the Anglican Church, whereas *our* anarchists here are inseparably associated with Protestantism. This *coup* required some cleverness, but we at last accomplished it. Ronge's movement of secession gave the first opportunity; the Swiss troubles offered the second; a little more, and the *Bonnet rouge* will be the symbol of the Protestant faith. Mark the advantage of this; see the distrust with which every nation of the Continent will regard England and her constitution mongering; look how they will be induced to associate her printed cottons with her Church, and connect the spread of her trade with the treacherous dissemination of her doctrines. So far, so good. And then, remember, that to all this anarchy and ruin the Church of the true faith alone offers any effectual opposition, – the ‘Platoon’ for the hour of conflict; but to the priest must they come to consolidate the shattered

edifice, – to rebuild the tottering fabric of society. Men do not see this yet; and there is but one way to teach it, – a tremendous lesson of blood and anarchy. This is in store for them, believe me. “My great difficulty is to persuade these people to patience. They will not wait, as Napoleon did for the Prussians, till they were ‘*en flagrant délit*,’ and yet, if they do not, the whole experiment goes for nothing. With all their hordes of horse, foot, and dragoons, their grape and canister, their grenades and rocket-batteries, they have not the courage of a poor priest His Holiness is, however, doing better. He has taken the whole *au sérieux*; he has brought himself to believe that moderate reforms – what are they? – will satisfy the wishes of demagogue ambition, and that when he has lashed popular fury into full speed, he can check it at will. Of course you guess what will follow, and you already see what a busy time is before us. Oh, my dear Michel, I can stop here, and, closing my eyes, revel in the glorious future that must succeed! I see the struggle before me; and know that some good men, mayhap some great ones, will fall in it; but in the distance I see the dome of St. Peter’s rising majestically above the clouds of battle, and the countless millions kneeling once more before its altars! “I do not clearly understand you about Ireland, although I agree in the policy of putting the Protestant rebel in the foreground. A conflict ever so brief with the Government would be most useful. I have thought a good deal on the subject, and am convinced that nothing would awe England more than the impression of any foreign assistance being given to Irish insurrection, while it would lend to *your* loyalty the grand trait of nationality. This is a highly important feature. Remark how they are taunting us with being ultramontane just now, and think what an answer this will be to the sarcasm! I am sure – that is, if you concurred with me – I could easily persuade some young fellows in this service to join the movement. As officers, and well acquainted with military details, they would have a formidable effect in English eyes. I have two or three in my mind already; one, a brother of my young Princess, that fair damsel of whom I spoke in my last letter as my destined *chargé d’affaires* at St. Petersburg, – a very difficult post to fill, and one for which I am by no means sure she will be adequate. When I reflect on the difficulties experienced by us in arriving at truth, we, who have the hearts of men so open before us, I am astounded at any success that attends a mere secular government. More than two thirds of those with whom I live are, so to say, in my power, – that is, their reputation and their fortunes; and yet I must make them feel this ten times a day to turn them to my account. Believe me the Holy Office was right: there is an inseparable bond of union between truth and a thumb-screw! “Tell me if you wish for military aid; substantially, I am well aware, it would be worth nothing, but it might assist in pushing your patriots, who, I must own, are a cautious race, a step further. This Dalton boy is a thorough Austrian up to this, – a regular ‘God and the Emperor’ soldier; but I have thrown more stubborn metal into the crucible, and seen it come out malleable. “You ask about the ‘converts;’ and I must own that their defection is a greater slur on Protestantism than any matter of glorification to us. They are unceasing in their exactions, and all fancy that no price is too high for the honor of their alliance; not a shovel-hat amongst them who does not expect to be a ‘monsignore’ at least! “Some, however, like my friend Lady Hester, are wealthy, and in this way reward the trouble they give us. On her security I have obtained a loan, not of the sum you wished for, but of a smaller amount, the particulars of which I enclose. I know not if you will agree with me, but my opinion is, that nothing should be expended on the Irish press. Its influence is slight, and purely local; reserve all your seductions for the heavier metal on the other side of

the Channel, and who, however ignorantly they talk, are always heard with respect and attention. "I cannot go over as you propose, nor, if I could, should I be of any use to you. You all understand your people, their habits and modes of thought, far better than we do, who have been fencing with cardinals, and sparring with the sacred college, for the last ten or a dozen years. Above all things, no precipitation; remember that your grand policy is the maintenance of that feverish condition that paralyses every effort of English policy. Parade all your grievances; but rather to display the submission with which you bear them than to pray for their relief. Be touchy only for trifles; keep all your martyrdom for great occasions; never forget that this time it is your loyalty! is to be rewarded. Adieu, my dear Michel. Tell his Grace whatever you think fit of these my opinions, and say, also, that he may rely on us here for withdrawing or confirming, as he pleases, any concessions he may deem proper to grant the English Government. We know his difficulties, and will take care not to augment them. As to the cardinal's hat, let him have no doubts; only beg him to be circumspect, and that this is not the time to assume it! If men would but see what a great cause we have, and how it is to be won by waiting, – nothing more, Michel, – nothing more, believe me, than mere waiting! "All that you tell me, therefore, about titles and dignities, and so forth, is premature. With patience you will be enabled to assume all, from which a momentary precipitation would infallibly see you repulsed. A few of your leading men still cling to the ruinous notion of elevating Ireland; for Heaven's sake cease not to combat this. It is the Church – the Church alone – for which we combat. Her difficulties are enough, without linking her fortune to such a sinking destiny! you have many able men amongst you, and they ought to see this proposition in its true light. "You are right – though you only threw it out in jest – about the interest I feel for my little Princess and her brother. It was the charity of a relative of theirs – a certain Mr. Godfrey – that first gave me the entrance into my career. He sent me to Louvain as a boy, and thence to Salamanca, and afterwards to Borne. He paid liberally for my education, and I believe intended, had he lived, to have provided handsomely for me. The story has an ugly ending; at least the rumors are gloomy ones; and I would rather not revive their memory. Here have I fallen into a sad track of thought, dear Michel; and now it is past midnight, and all is silent about me, and I feel half as if I ought to tell you everything, and yet that everything resolves itself into nothing; for of my actual knowledge, I possess not one single fact "Can you conceive the position of a man with a great, a glorious future before him, – rewards the very highest his wildest ambition ever fancied, – a sphere to exercise powers that he feels within, and but needing a field for their display? Picture to yourself such a man, and then fancy him tortured by one terrible suspicion, one damning doubt, – that there is a flaw in his just title to all this; that some day or other there may rise up against him – he knows not how or whence or why – from the very earth as it were, a voice to say, 'you are disowned, disgraced, – you are infamous before men!' Such a terrible hell have I carried for years within me! Yes, Michel, this ulcer is eating at my very heart, and yet it is only like a vision of evil, – some mind-drawn picture, carried up from infancy through boyhood, and stealing on, year by year, into the prime of life, strengthening its ties on me like a malady. "You will say this is a diseased imagination, – the fruits of an overworked brain, or, not improbably, the result of an overwrought vanity, that would seek consolation for failures in the dim regions of superstition. It may be so; and yet I have found this terror beset me more in the seasons of my strength and activity than in those of sickness and depression. Could I have given a shape and color to my thoughts,

I might have whispered them in the confessional, and sought some remedy against their pain; but I could not. They flash on my waking faculties like the memories of a recent dream. I half doubt that they are not real, and look around me for the evidences of some change in my condition. I tremble at the first footstep that draws near my door, lest the new-comer should bring the tidings of my downfall! “I was at Borne – a student of the Irish college – when this cloud first broke over me. Some letter came from Ireland, – some document containing a confession, I believe. I was summoned before the superiors, and questioned as to my family, of which I knew nothing; and as to my means, of which I could tell as little. My attainments at the college were inquired into, and a strict scrutiny as to my conduct; but though both were above reproach, not a word of commendation escaped them; on the contrary, I overheard, amid their whisperings, the terrible word ‘degradato!’ You can fancy how my heart sank within me at a phrase so significant of shame and debasement! “I was told the next morning that my patron was dead, and that, having no longer the means to support the charges of a student, I should become a ‘laico;’ in other words, a species of servant in the college. These were dreadful tidings; but they were short of what I feared. There was nothing said of ‘degradation.’ I struggled, however, against the hardship of the sentence, – I appealed to my proficiency in study, the prizes I had won, the character I bore, and so on; but although a few months more would have seen me qualified for the priesthood, my prayer was rejected, and I was made a ‘laico.’ Two months afterwards I was sent to the convent of ‘Espiazione,’ at Ancona. Many of my early letters have told you the sufferings of that life! – the awful punishments of that gloomy prison, where all are ‘degradati,’ and where none are to be found save men stained with the foulest crimes. I was seventeen months there, – a ‘laico,’ – a servant of the meanest class, – no consolation of study, no momentary solace in tracing others’ thoughts to relieve the horrible solitude of my own. Labor – incessant debasing labor – my lot from day till dawn. “I have no clew to the nature of my guilt I declare solemnly before Heaven, as I write these lines, that I am not conscious of a crime, save such as the confessional has expiated; and yet the ritual of my daily life implied such. The offices and litanies I had to repeat, the penances I suffered, were those of the ‘Espiazione!’ I dare not trust myself to recall this terrible period, – the only rebellious sentiment my heart has ever known sprang from that tortured existence. As an humble priest in the wildest regions of Alpine snow, as a missionary among the most barbarous tribes, I could have braved hardships, want, death itself; but as the ‘de-gradato,’ dragging out life in failing strength, with faculties each day weaker, watching the ebb of intellect, and wondering how near I was to that moping idiocy about me, and whether in that state suffering and sorrow slept! Oh, Michel! my hands tremble, and the tears blot the paper as I write. Can this ordeal ever work for good? The mass sink into incurable insanity, – a few, like myself, escape; and how do they come back into the world? I speak not of other changes; but what hardness of the heart is engendered by extreme suffering, what indifference to the miseries of others I How compassionless do we become to griefs that are nothing to those we have ourselves endured! you know well that mine has not been a life of indolence, that I have toiled hard and long in the cause of our faith, and yet I have never been able to throw off the dreary influence of that conventual existence. In the excitement of political intrigue I remember it least; in the whirlwind of passions by which men are moved, I can for a time forget the cell, the penance, and the chain. I have strong resentments, too, Michel. I would make them feel that to him they sentenced once to ‘degradation’ must they now come for advice and guidance, – that

the poor 'laico' can now sit at their councils and direct their acts. There is something so glorious in the tyranny of Rome, so high above the petty sovereignty of mere kings, soaring beyond the bounds of realms and states, crossing Alps and oceans, proclaiming its proud edicts in the great cities of Europe, declaring its truths in the silent forests of the Far West, stirring the heart of the monarch on his throne, thrilling the rugged breast of the Indian in his wigwam, that even to bear a banner in its ranks is a noble privilege. And now I come back to these children, with whose fortunes I feel myself – I know not how – bound up. They were related to this Mr. Godfrey, and that, perchance, may be the secret link which binds us. The girl might have won a grand destiny, – she had beauty, grace, fascination, all that men prize in these days of ours; but there was no high ambition, – nothing beyond the thirst for personal admiration. I watched her anxiously and long. There was a weak goodness about her heart, too, that gave no promise of self-sacrifice. Such, however, as she is, she is mine. As for the boy, I saw him yesterday for the first time; but he cannot be a difficult conquest. Again I hear you ask me, why can I turn from great events and stirring themes to think of these? and again I own that I cannot tell you. Power over every one, the humblest as the highest, the weakest in purpose and the strongest of heart, – power to send forth or to restrain, to crush or to exalt, – this is the prize of those who, like you and me, walk humbly, that we may reign proudly. “And now, dear Michel, good-bye. I have made you a confession, and if I have told little, the fault is not mine. You know all my sentiments on great events, – my hopes and my anticipations. I must leave this to-morrow, or the day after, for there is much to do beyond the Alps. If kings and kaisers but knew as much as we poor priests, the coming would scarce be a merry Christmas with them.

“Yours, in all truth and brotherhood,

“Mathew D’Esmonde.

“Feast of St Pancratras, Hof Thor, Vienna.”

It was already daybreak when D’Esmonde finished his letter; but, instead of retiring to bed, he opened his window, and sat enjoying the fresh air of the morning. Partly from habit, he opened his book of “offices;” but his eyes wandered, even from the oft-repeated lines, to the scene before him, – the spreading glaxis, – where already the troops were mustering for parade. “What a strange thing is courage!” thought he. “I, who feel my spirit quail at the very rumbling sound of a gun-carriage, have a soul to see all Europe convulsed, and every nation in arms, undismayed!”

CHAPTER XI. THE CADET VON DALTON

As Madame de Heidendorf's mornings were always passed in receiving the visits or answering the letters of her political acquaintances, Kate was free to spend her hours with Frank, exchanging confidences, and talking of that dear home from which they were more separated even by circumstance than by space.

The cadet had obtained leave for the entire day, – an inconceivable favor in his eyes, – and Kate was seated at her breakfast when he appeared. When they met the day before, Frank's undivided attention had been drawn to Kate herself, – the change in her whole air and manner, that graceful dignity of mien which elevated his regard for her to a species of worship. Now, however, he had time to be struck with the accessories of her position, – the gorgeous chamber, the splendid silver of the service, the rich liveries, everything which bespoke her proud and affluent condition.

"I almost start back with shame, Kate," said he, "if, in passing these great mirrors, I catch a glimpse of my humble figure, so unsuited does it seem to magnificence like this; nor can I help thinking that your household agrees with me. With all their respectful courtesy, they must wonder when they look on the brother of their Princess."

"You know well, dearest Frank, that in your service the highest in the land must pass the ordeal of cadetship."

"Which means half an hour for an archduke, and a forenoon for a serene highness. Even Walstein took but a week to spring from the ranks to a lieutenancy; a month later saw him a rittmeister; and already he commands a regiment."

"What a young soldier to have caught up the complaining cant about slow promotion!" said Kate, laughing.

"Ten months a cadet, and not even made corporal yet!" sighed Frank. "To be sure, I might have been, had it not been for the 'stockhaus.'"

"And what may that be, dear Frank?"

"The prison; neither more nor less. When I came here, Kate, the nephew or grand-nephew of the Feld-Marschall von Auersberg, I thought it became me to assume something like style in my mode of life. My comrades told me as much, too; and as I had no difficulty in obtaining credit, I ran in debt everywhere. I lent to all who asked me, and gave away to many more. Every one said the Feld would pay one day or other, and I never confessed how poor we were at home. I know I was wrong there, dearest Kate; I feel that acutely now; but somehow the deception I began with others gained even more rapidly on myself. From continually talking of our Dalton blood, and our high position in our own country, I grew to believe it all, and fancied that some, at least, of these imaginings must be real. But, above all, I cherished the hope that promotion would come at last, and that I should live to be an honored soldier of the Kaiser.

"In the very midst of all this self-deception, the Feld returns to Vienna from a tour of inspection, and, instead of sending to see me, orders my Colonel to his presence. I know not, of course, what passed, but report alleges that for an hour the old General harangued him in terms the most bitter and insulting. Now, my dear sister, the wrath poured out upon a commanding officer does not become diminished as it descends through the successive grades of rank, and falls at last on the private. For *my* misdemeanor the regiment was ordered away from Vienna, and sent to Laybach, in the very depth of winter too. This could not help my popularity much among my comrades; and as I was now as destitute of credit as of means, you may fancy the alteration of my position, – the black bread of the commissary instead of the refined cookery of the 'Schwan;' the midnight patrol, in rain or snow-drift, in place of the Joyous carouse of the supper-table; the rude tyranny of a vulgar sergeant, in lieu of the friendly counsels of an equal; all that is menial and servile, – and there is enough of both in the service, – heaped upon me day after day; till, at last, my only hope was in the chance that I

might ultimately imbibe the rude feelings of the peasant-soldier, and drag out my existence without a wish or a care for better.

“As if to make life less endurable to me, the officers were forbidden to hold intercourse with me; even such of the cadets as were above the humbler class were ordered not to associate with me; my turns of duty were doubled; my punishments for each trifling offence increased; and there I was, a soldier in dress, a convict in duty, left to think over all the flattering illusions I had once conceived of the service, its chivalry, and its fame.

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