

GIACOMO CASANOVA

THE MEMOIRS OF
JACQUES CASANOVA DE
SEINGALT, 1725-1798.
VOLUME 24: LONDON
TO BERLIN

Giacomo Casanova

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CHAPTER XIV

Bottarelli—A Letter from Pauline—The Avenging Parrot—Pocchini—
Guerra, the Venetian—I Meet Sara Again; My Idea of Marrying Her and Settling
in Switzerland—The Hanoverians

Thus ended the first act of the comedy; the second began the next morning. I was just getting up, when I heard a noise at the street door, and on putting my head out of the window I saw Pocchini, the scoundrel who had robbed me at Stuttgart trying to get into my house. I cried out wrathfully that I would have nothing to do with him, and slammed down my window.

A little later Goudar put in an appearance. He had got a copy of the St. James's Chronicle, containing a brief report of my arrest, and of my being set a liberty under a bail of eighty guineas. My name and the lady's were disguised, but Rostaing and Bottarelli were set down plainly, and the editor praised their conduct. I felt as if I should like to know Bottarelli, and begged Goudar to take me to him, and Martinelli, happening to call just then, said he would come with us.

We entered a wretched room on the third floor of a wretched house, and there we beheld a picture of the greatest misery. A woman and five children clothed in rags formed the foreground, and in the background was Bottarelli, in an old dressing-gown, writing at a table worthy of Philemon and Baucis. He rose as we came in, and the sight of him moved me to compassion. I said,—

"Do you know me, sir?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"I am Casanova, against whom you bore false witness; whom you tried to cast into Newgate."

"I am very sorry, but look around you and say what choice have I? I have no bread to give my children. I will do as much in your favour another time for nothing."

"Are you not afraid of the gallows?"

"No, for perjury is not punished with death; besides it is very difficult to prove."

"I have heard you are a poet."

"Yes. I have lengthened the Didone and abridged the Demetrio."

"You are a great poet, indeed!"

I felt more contempt than hatred for the rascal, and gave his wife a guinea, for which she presented me with a wretched pamphlet by her husband: "The Secrets of the Freemasons Displayed." Bottarelli had been a monk in his native city, Pisa, and had fled to England with his wife, who had been a nun.

About this time M. de Saa surprised me by giving me a letter from my fair Portuguese, which confirmed the sad fate of poor Clairmont. Pauline said she was married to Count Al—. I was astonished to hear M. de Saa observe that he had known all about Pauline from the moment she arrived in London. That is the hobby of all diplomatists; they like people to believe that they are omniscient. However, M. de Saa was a man of worth and talent, and one could excuse this weakness as an incident inseparable from his profession; while most diplomatists only make themselves ridiculous by their assumption of universal knowledge.

M. de Saa had been almost as badly treated by the Charpillon as myself, and we might have condoled with one another, but the subject was not mentioned.

A few days afterwards, as I was walking idly about, I passed a place called the Parrot Market. As I was amusing myself by looking at these curious birds, I saw a fine young one in a cage, and asked what language it spoke. They told me that it was quite young and did not speak at all yet, so I bought it for ten guineas. I thought I would teach the bird a pretty speech, so I had the cage hung by my bed, and repeated dozens of times every day the following sentence: "The Charpillon is a bigger wh—e than her mother."

The only end I had in view was my private amusement, and in a fortnight the bird had learnt the phrase with the utmost exactness; and every time it uttered the words it accompanied them with a shriek of laughter which I had not taught it, but which made me laugh myself.

One day Gondar heard the bird, and told me that if I sent it to the Exchange I should certainly get fifty guineas for it. I welcomed the idea, and resolved to make the parrot the instrument of my vengeance against the woman who had treated me so badly. I secured myself from fear of the law, which is severe in such cases, by entrusting the bird to my negro, to whom such merchandise was very suitable.

For the first two or three days my parrot did not attract much attention, its observations being in French; but as soon as those who knew the subject of them had heard it, its audience increased and bids were made. Fifty guineas seemed rather too much, and my negro wanted me to lower the price, but I would not agree, having fallen in love with this odd revenge.

In the course of a week Goudar came to inform me of the effect the parrot's criticism had produced in the Charpillon family. As the vendor was my negro, there could be no doubt as to whom it belonged, and who had been its master of languages. Goudar said that the Charpillon thought my vengeance very ingenious, but that the mother and aunts were furious. They had consulted several counsel, who agreed in saying that a parrot could not be indicted for libel, but that they could make me pay dearly for my jest if they could prove that I had been the bird's instructor. Goudar warned me to be careful of owning to the fact, as two witnesses would suffice to undo me.

The facility with which false witnesses may be produced in London is something dreadful. I have myself seen the word evidence written in large characters in a window; this is as much as to say that false witnesses may be procured within.

The St. James's Chronicle contained an article on my parrot, in which the writer remarked that the ladies whom the bird insulted must be very poor and friendless, or they would have bought it at once, and have thus prevented the thing from becoming the talk of the town. He added,—

"The teacher of the parrot has no doubt made the bird an instrument of his vengeance, and has displayed his wit in doing so; he ought to be an Englishman."

I met my good friend Edgar, and asked him why he had not bought the little slanderer.

"Because it delights all who know anything about the object of the slander," said he.

At last Jarbe found a purchaser for fifty guineas, and I heard afterwards that Lord Grosvenor had bought it to please the Charpillon, with whom he occasionally diverted himself.

Thus my relations with that girl came to an end. I have seen her since with the greatest indifference, and without any renewal of the old pain.

One day, as I was going into St. James's Park, I saw two girls drinking milk in a room on the ground floor of a house. They called out to me, but not knowing them I passed on my way. However, a young officer of my acquaintance came after me and said they were Italians, and being curious to see them I retracted my steps.

When I entered the room I was accosted by the scoundrelly Pocchini, dressed in a military uniform, who said he had the honour of introducing me to his daughters.

"Indeed," said I, "I remember two other daughters of yours robbing me of a snuff-box and two watches at Stuttgart."

"You lie!" said the impudent rascal.

I gave him no verbal answer, but took up a glass of milk and flung it in his face, and then left the room without more ado.

I was without my sword. The young officer who had brought me into the place followed me and told me I must not go without giving his friend some satisfaction.

"Tell him to come out, and do you escort him to the Green Park, and I shall have the pleasure of giving him a caning in your presence, unless you would like to fight for him; if so, you must let me go home and get my sword. But do you know this man whom you call your friend?"

"No, but he is an officer, and it is I that brought him here."

"Very good, I will fight to the last drop of my blood; but I warn you your friend is a thief. But go; I will await you."

In the course of a quarter of an hour they all came out, but the Englishman and Pocchini followed me alone. There were a good many people about, and I went before them till we reached Hyde Park. Pocchini attempted to speak to me, but I replied, lifting my cane,—

"Scoundrel, draw your sword, unless you want me to give you a thrashing!"

"I will never draw upon a defenceless man."

I gave him a blow with my cane by way of answer, and the coward, instead of drawing his sword, began to cry out that I wished to draw him into a fight. The Englishman burst out laughing and begged me to pardon his interference, and then, taking me by the arm, said,—

"Come along, sir, I see you know the gentleman."

The coward went off in another direction, grumbling as he went.

On the way I informed the officer of the very good reasons I had for treating Pocchini as a rogue, and he agreed that I had been perfectly right. "Unfortunately," he added, "I am in love with one of his daughters."

When we were in the midst of St. James's Park we saw them, and I could not help laughing when I noticed Goudar with one of them on each side.

"How did you come to know these ladies?" said I.

"Their father the captain," he answered, "has sold me jewels; he introduced me to them."

"Where did you leave our father?" asked one.

"In Hyde Park, after giving him a caning."

"You served him quite right."

The young Englishman was indignant to hear them approving my ill-treatment of their father, and shook my hand and went away, swearing to me that he would never be seen in their company again.

A whim of Goudar's, to which I was weak enough to consent, made me dine with these miserable women in a tavern on the borders of London. The rascally Goudar made them drunk, and in this state they told some terrible truths about their pretended father. He did not live with them, but paid them nocturnal visits in which he robbed them of all the money they had earned. He was their pander, and made them rob their visitors instructing them to pass it off as a joke if the theft was discovered. They gave him the stolen articles, but he never said what he did with them. I could not help laughing at this involuntary confession, remembering what Goudar had said about Pocchini selling him jewels.

After this wretched meal I went away leaving the duty of escorting them back to Goudar. He came and saw me the next day, and informed me that the girls had been arrested and taken to prison just as they were entering their house.

"I have just been to Pocchini's," said he, "but the landlord tells me he has not been in since yesterday."

The worthy and conscientious Goudar added that he did not care if he never saw him again, as he owed the fellow ten guineas for a watch, which his daughters had probably stolen, and which was well worth double.

Four days later I saw him again, and he informed me that the rascal had left London with a servant-maid, whom he had engaged at a registry office where any number of servants are always ready to take service with the first comer. The keeper of the office answers for their fidelity.

"The girl he has gone with is a pretty one, from what the man tells me, and they have taken ship from London. I am sorry he went away before I could pay him for the watch; I am dreading every moment to meet the individual from whom it was stolen."

I never heard what became of the girls, but Pocchini will re-appear on the scene in due course.

I led a tranquil and orderly life, which I should have been pleased to continue for the remainder of my days; but circumstances and my destiny ordered it otherwise, and against these it is not becoming in a Christian philosopher to complain. I went several times to see my daughter at her school, and I also frequented the British Museum, where I met Dr. Mati. One day I found an Anglican minister with him, and I asked the clergyman how many different sects there were in England.

"Sir," he replied in very tolerable Italian, "no one can give a positive answer to that question, for every week some sect dies and some new one is brought into being. All that is necessary is for a man of good faith, or some rogue desirous of money or notoriety, to stand in some frequented place and begin preaching. He explains some texts of the Bible in his own fashion, and if he pleases the gapers around him they invite him to expound next Sunday, often in a tavern. He keeps the appointment and explains his new doctrines in a spirited manner. Then people begin to talk of him; he disputes with ministers of other sects; he and his followers give themselves a name, and the thing is done. Thus, or almost thus, are all the numerous English sects produced."

About this time M. Steffano Guerra, a noble Venetian who was travelling with the leave of his Government, lost a case against an English painter who had executed a miniature painting of one of the prettiest ladies in London, Guerra having given a written promise to pay twenty-five guineas. When it was finished Guerra did not like it, and would not take it or pay the price. The Englishman, in accordance with the English custom, began by arresting his debtor; but Guerra was released on bail, and brought the matter before the courts, which condemned him to pay the twenty-five guineas. He appealed, lost again, and was in the end obliged to pay. Guerra contented that he had ordered a portrait, that a picture bearing no likeness to the lady in question was not a portrait, and that he had therefore a right to refuse payment. The painter replied that it was a portrait as it had been painted from life. The judgment was that the painter must live by his trade, and that as Guerra had given him painting to do he must therefore provide him with the wherewithal to live, seeing that the artist swore he had done his best to catch the likeness. Everybody thought this sentence just, and so did I; but I confess it also seemed rather hard, especially to Guerra, who with costs had to pay a hundred guineas for the miniature.

Malingan's daughter died just as her father received a public box on the ear from a nobleman who liked piquet, but did not like players who corrected the caprices of fortune. I gave the poor wretch the wherewithal to bury his daughter and to leave England. He died soon after at Liege, and his wife told me of the circumstance, saying that he had expired regretting his inability to pay his debts.

M. M—F— came to London as the representative of the canton of Berne, and I called, but was not received. I suspected that he had got wind of the liberties I had taken with pretty Sara, and did not want me to have an opportunity for renewing them. He was a somewhat eccentric man, so I did not take offence, and had almost forgotten all about it when chance led me to the Marylebone Theatre one evening. The spectators sat at little tables, and the charge for admittance was only a shilling, but everyone was expected to order something, were it only a pot of ale.

On going into the theatre I chanced to sit down beside a girl whom I did not notice at first, but soon after I came in she turned towards me, and I beheld a ravishing profile which somehow seemed familiar; but I attributed that to the idea of perfect beauty that was graven on my soul. The more I looked at her the surer I felt that I had never seen her before, though a smile of inexpressible slyness

had begun to play about her lips. One of her gloves fell, and I hastened to restore it to her, whereupon she thanked me in a few well-chosen French sentences.

"Madam is not English, then?" said I, respectfully.

"No, sir, I am a Swiss, and a friend of yours."

At this I looked round, and on my right hand sat Madame M– F–, then her eldest daughter, then her husband. I got up, and after bowing to the lady, for whom I had a great esteem, I saluted her husband, who only replied by a slight movement of the head. I asked Madame M– F– what her husband had against me, and she said that Possano had written to him telling some dreadful stories about me.

There was not time for me to explain and justify myself, so I devoted all my energies to the task of winning the daughter's good graces. In three years she had grown into a perfect beauty: she knew it, and by her blushes as she spoke to me I knew she was thinking of what had passed between us in the presence of my housekeeper. I was anxious to find out whether she would acknowledge the fact, or deny it altogether. If she had done so I should have despised her. When I had seen her before, the blossom of her beauty was still in the bud, now it had opened out in all its splendour.

"Charming Sara," I said, "you have so enchanted me that I cannot help asking you a couple of questions, which if you value my peace of mind you will answer. Do you remember what happened at Berne?"

"Yes."

"And do you repent of what you did?"

"No."

No man of any delicacy could ask the third question, which may be understood. I felt sure that Sara would make me happy-nay, that she was even longing for the moment, and gave reins to my passions, determined to convince her that I was deserving of her love. The waiter came to enquire if we had any orders, and I begged Madame M– F– to allow me to offer her some oysters. After the usual polite refusals she gave in, and I profited by her acceptance to order all the delicacies of the season, including a hare (a great delicacy in London), champagne, choice liqueurs, larks, ortolans, truffles, sweetmeats—everything, in fact, that money could buy, and I was not at all surprised when the bill proved to amount to ten guineas. But I was very much surprised when M. M– F–, who had eaten like a Turk and drunk like a Swiss, said calmly that it was too dear.

I begged him politely not to trouble himself about the cost; and by way of proving that I did not share his opinion, I gave the waiter half-a-guinea; the worthy man looked as if he wished that such customers came more often. The Swiss, who had been pale and gloomy enough a short while before; was rubicund and affable. Sara glanced at me and squeezed my hand; I had conquered.

When the play was over, M– F– asked me if I would allow him to call on me. I embraced him in reply. His servant came in, and said that he could not find a coach; and I, feeling rather surprised that he had not brought his carriage, offered him the use of mine, telling my man to get me a sedan-chair.

"I accept your kind offer," said he, "on the condition that you allow me to occupy the chair."

I consented to this arrangement, and took the mother and the two daughters with me in the carriage.

On the way, Madame M– F– was very polite, gently blaming her husband for the rudeness of which I had to complain. I said that I would avenge myself by paying an assiduous court to him in the future; but she pierced me to the heart by saying that they were on the point of departing. "We wanted to go on the day after next," she said, "and to-morrow we shall have to leave our present rooms to their new occupants. A matter of business which my husband was not able to conclude will oblige us to stay for another week, and to-morrow we shall have the double task of moving and finding new apartments."

"Then you have not yet got new rooms?"

"No, but my husband says he is certain to find some to-morrow morning."

"Furnished, I suppose, for as you intend to leave you will be selling, your furniture."

"Yes, and we shall have to pay the expenses of carriage to the buyer."

On hearing that M. M– F– was sure of finding lodgings, I was precluded from offering to accommodate them in my own house, as the lady might think that I only made the offer because I was sure it would not be accepted.

When we got to the door of their house we alighted, and the mother begged me to come in. She and her husband slept on the second floor, and the two girls on the third. Everything was upside down, and as Madame M– F– had something to say to the landlady she asked me to go up with her daughters. It was cold, and the room we entered had no fire in it. The sister went into the room adjoining and I stayed with Sara, and all of a sudden I clasped her to my breast, and feeling that her desires were as ardent as mine I fell with her on to a sofa where we mingled our beings in all the delights of voluptuous ardours. But this happiness was short lived; scarcely was the work achieved when we heard a footstep on the stair. It was the father.

If M– F– had had any eyes he must have found us out, for my face bore the marks of agitation, the nature of which it was easy to divine. We exchanged a few brief compliments; I shook his hand and disappeared. I was in such a state of excitement when I got home that I made up my mind to leave England and to follow Sara to Switzerland. In the night I formed my plans, and resolved to offer the family my house during the time they stayed in England, and if necessary to force them to accept my offer.

In the morning I hastened to call on M– F–, and found him on his doorstep.

"I am going to try and get a couple of rooms," said he.

"They are already found," I replied. "My house is at your service, and you must give me the preference. Let us come upstairs."

"Everybody is in bed."

"Never mind," said I, and we proceeded to go upstairs.

Madame M– F– apologized for being in bed. Her husband told her that I wanted to let them some rooms, but I laughed and said I desired they would accept my hospitality as that of a friend. After some polite denials my offer was accepted, and it was agreed that the whole family should take up their quarters with me in the evening.

I went home, and was giving the necessary orders when I was told that two young ladies wished to see me. I went down in person, and I was agreeably surprised to see Sara and her sister. I asked them to come in, and Sara told me that the landlady would not let their belongings out of the house before her father paid a debt of forty guineas, although a city merchant had assured her it should be settled in a week. The long and snort of it was that Sara's father had sent me a bill and begged me to discount it.

I took the bill and gave her a bank note for fifty pounds in exchange, telling her that she could give me the change another time. She thanked me with great simplicity and went her way, leaving me delighted with the confidence she had placed in me.

The fact of M. M– F–'s wanting forty guineas did not make me divine that he was in some straits, for I looked at everything through rose-coloured glasses, and was only too happy to be of service to him.

I made a slight dinner in order to have a better appetite for supper, and spent the afternoon in writing letters. In the evening M. M– F–'s man came with three great trunks and innumerable cardboard boxes, telling me that the family would soon follow; but I awaited them in vain till nine o'clock. I began to get alarmed and went to the house, where I found them all in a state of consternation. Two ill-looking fellows who were in the room enlightened me; and assuming a jovial and unconcerned air, I said,—

"I'll wager, now, that this is the work of some fierce creditor."

"You are right," answered the father, "but I am sure of discharging the debt in five or six days, and that's why I put off my departure."

"Then you were arrested after you had sent on your trunks."

"Just after."

"And what have you done?"

"I have sent for bail."

"Why did you not send to me?"

"Thank you, I am grateful for your kindness, but you are a foreigner, and sureties have to be householders."

"But you ought to have told me what had happened, for I have got you an excellent supper, and I am dying of hunger."

It was possible that this debt might exceed my means, so I did not dare to offer to pay it. I took Sara aside, and on hearing that all his trouble was on account of a debt of a hundred and fifty pounds, I asked the bailiff whether we could go away if the debt was paid.

"Certainly," said he, shewing me the bill of exchange.

I took out three bank notes of fifty pounds each, and gave them to the man, and taking the bill I said to the poor Swiss,—

"You shall pay me the money before you leave England."

The whole family wept with joy, and after embracing them all I summoned them to come and sup with me and forget the troubles of life.

We drove off to my house and had a merry supper, though the worthy mother could not quite forget her sadness. After supper I took them to the rooms which had been prepared for them, and with which they were delighted, and so I wished them good night, telling them that they should be well entertained till their departure, and that I hoped to follow them into Switzerland.

When I awoke the next day I was in a happy frame of mind. On examining my desires I found that they had grown too strong to be overcome, but I did not wish to overcome them. I loved Sara, and I felt so certain of possessing her that I put all desires out of my mind; desires are born only of doubt, and doubt torments the soul. Sara was mine; she had given herself to me out of pure passion, without any shadow of self-interest.

I went to the father's room, and found him engaged in opening his trunks. His wife looked sad, so I asked her if she were not well. She replied that her health was perfect, but that the thought of the sea voyage troubled her sorely. The father begged me to excuse him at breakfast as he had business to attend to. The two young ladies came down, and after we had breakfast I asked the mother why they were unpacking their trunks so short a time before starting. She smiled and said that one trunk would be ample for all their possessions, as they had resolved to sell all superfluities. As I had seen some beautiful dresses, fine linen, and exquisite lace, I could not refrain from saying that it would be a great pity to sell cheaply what would have to be replaced dearly.

"You are right," she said, "but, nevertheless, there is no pleasure so great as the consciousness of having paid one's debts."

"You must not sell anything," I replied, in a lively manner, "for as I am going to Switzerland with you I can pay your debts, and you shall repay me when you can."

At these words astonishment was depicted on her face.

"I did not think you were speaking seriously," said she.

"Perfectly seriously, and here is the object of my vows."

With these words I seized Sara's hand and covered it with kisses.

Sara blushed, said nothing, and the mother looked kindly at us; but after a moment's silence she spoke at some length, and with the utmost candour and wisdom. She gave me circumstantial information as to the position of the family and her husband's restricted means, saying that under

the circumstances he could not have avoided running into debt, but that he had done wrong to bring them all with him to London.

"If he had been by himself," she said, "he could have lived here comfortably enough with only one servant, but with a family to provide for the two thousand crowns per annum provided by the Government are quite insufficient. My old father has succeeded in persuading the State to discharge my husband's debts, but to make up the extra expense they will not employ a Charge d'affaires; a banker with the title of agent will collect the interest on their English securities."

She ended by saying that she thought Sara was fortunate to have pleased me, but that she was not sure whether her husband would consent to the marriage.

The word "marriage" made Sara blush, and I was pleased, though it was evident there would be difficulties in the way.

M— F— came back and told his wife that two clothes dealers would come to purchase their superfluous clothes in the afternoon; but after explaining my ideas I had not much trouble in convincing him that it would be better not to sell them, and that he could become my debtor to the amount of two hundred pounds, on which he could pay interest till he was able to return me my capital. The agreement was written out the same day, but I did not mention the marriage question, as his wife had told me she would discuss it with him in private.

On the third day he came down by himself to talk with me.

"My wife," he began, "has told me of your intentions, and I take it as a great honour, I assure you; but I cannot give you my Sara, as she is promised to M. de W—, and family reasons prevent me from going back from my word. Besides my old father, a strict Calvinist, would object to the difference in religion. He would never believe that his dear little grandchild would be happy with a Roman Catholic."

As a matter of fact I was not at all displeased at what he said. I was certainly very fond of Sara, but the word "marriage" had a disagreeable sound to me. I answered that circumstances might change in time, and that in the meanwhile I should be quite content if he would allow me to be the friend of the family and to take upon myself all the responsibility of the journey. He promised everything, and assured me that he was delighted at his daughter having won my affection.

After this explanation I gave Sara as warm marks of my love as decency would allow in the presence of her father and mother, and I could see that all the girl thought of was love.

The fifth day I went up to her room, and finding her in bed all the fires of passion flamed up in my breast, for since my first visit to their house I had not been alone with her. I threw myself upon her, covering her with kisses, and she shewed herself affectionate but reserved. In vain I endeavoured to succeed; she opposed a gentle resistance to my efforts, and though she caressed me, she would not let me attain my end.

"Why, divine Sara," said I, "do you oppose my loving ecstasy?"

"Dearest, I entreat of you not to ask for any more than I am willing to give."

"Then you no longer love me?"

"Cruel man, I adore you!"

"Then why do you treat me to a refusal, after having once surrendered unreservedly?"

"I have given myself to you, and we have both been happy, and I think that should be enough for us."

"There must be some reason for this change. If you love me, dearest Sara, this renunciation must be hard for you to bear."

"I confess it, but nevertheless I feel it is my duty. I have made up my mind to subdue my passion from no weak motive, but from a sense of what I owe to myself. I am under obligations to you, and if I were to repay the debt I have contracted with my body I should be degraded in my own eyes. When we enjoyed each other before only love was between us—there was no question of debit and

credit. My heart is now the thrall of what I owe you, and to these debts it will not give what it gave so readily to love."

"This is a strange philosophy, Sara; believe me it is fallacious, and the enemy of your happiness as well as mine. These sophisms lead you astray and wound me to the heart. Give me some credit for delicacy of feeling, and believe me you owe me nothing."

"You must confess that if you had not loved me you would have done nothing for my father."

"Certainly I will confess nothing of the kind; I would readily do as much, and maybe more, out of regard for your worthy mother. It is quite possible, indeed, that in doing this small service for your father I had no thoughts of you at all."

"It might be so; but I do not believe it was so. Forgive me, dearest, but I cannot make up my mind to pay my debts in the way you wish."

"It seems to me that if you are grateful to me your love ought to be still more ardent."

"It cannot be more ardent than it is already."

"Do you know how grievously you make me suffer?"

"Alas! I suffer too; but do not reproach me; let us love each other still."

This dialogue is not the hundredth part of what actually passed between us till dinner-time. The mother came in, and finding me seated at the foot of the daughter's bed, laughed, and asked me why I kept her in bed. I answered with perfect coolness that we had been so interested in our conversation that we had not noticed the flight of time.

I went to dress, and as I thought over the extraordinary change which had taken place in Sara I resolved that it should not last for long. We dined together gaily, and Sara and I behaved in all respects like two lovers. In the evening I took them to the Italian Opera, coming home to an excellent supper.

The next morning I passed in the city, having accounts to settle with my bankers. I got some letters of exchange on Geneva, and said farewell to the worthy Mr. Bosanquet. In the afternoon I got a coach for Madame M— F— to pay some farewells calls, and I went to say good-bye to my daughter at school. The dear little girl burst into tears, saying that she would be lost without me, and begging me not to forget her. I was deeply moved. Sophie begged me to go and see her mother before I left England, and I decided on doing so.

At supper we talked over our journey, and M. M— F— agreed with me that it would be better to go by Dunkirk than Ostend. He had very little more business to attend to. His debts were paid, and he said he thought he would have a matter of fifty guineas in his pocket at the journey's end, after paying a third share of all the travelling expenses. I had to agree to this, though I made up my mind at the same time not to let him see any of the accounts. I hoped to win Sara, in one way or another, when we got to Berne.

The next day, after breakfast, I took her hand in presence of her mother, and asked her if she would give me her heart if I could obtain her father's consent at Berne.

"Your mother," I added, "has promised me that hers shall not be wanting."

At this the mother got up, and saying that we had no doubt a good deal to talk over, she and her eldest daughter went out to pay some calls.

As soon as we were alone Sara said that she could not understand how I could have the smallest doubt as to whether her consent would be given.

"I have shewn you how well I love you," said she, tenderly; "and I am sure I should be very happy as your wife. You may be sure that your wishes will be mine, and that, however far you lead me, Switzerland shall claim no thought of mine."

I pressed the amorous Sara to my bosom in a transport of delight, which was shared by her; but as she saw me grow more ardent she begged me to be moderate. Claspings me in her arms she adjured me not to ask her for that which she was determined not to grant till she was mine by lawful wedlock.

"You will drive me to despair! Have you reflected that this resistance may cost me my life? Can you love, and yet entertain this fatal prejudice? And yet I am sure you love me, and pleasure too."

"Yes, dearest one, I do love you, and amorous pleasure with you; but you must respect my delicacy."

My eyes were wet with tears, and she was so affected that she fell fainting to the ground. I lifted her up and gently laid her on the bed. Her pallor alarmed me. I brought smelling-salts, I rubbed her forehead with Savoy-water, and she soon opened her eyes, and seemed delighted to find me calm again.

The thought of taking advantage of her helplessness would have horrified me. She sat up on the bed, and said,—

"You have just given a true proof of the sincerity of your affection."

"Did you think, sweetheart, that I was vile enough to abuse your weakness? Could I enjoy a pleasure in which you had no share?"

"I did not think you would do such a thing, but I should not have resisted, though it is possible that I should not have loved you afterwards."

"Sara, though you do not know, you charm my soul out of my body."

After this I sat down sadly on the bed, and abandoned myself to the most melancholy reflections, from which Sara did not endeavour to rouse me.

Her mother came in and asked why she was on the bed, but not at all suspiciously. Sara told her the truth.

M. M— F— came in soon after, and we dined together, but silently. What I had heard from the girl's lips had completely overwhelmed me. I saw I had nothing to hope for, and that it was time for me to look to myself. Six weeks before, God had delivered me from my bondage to an infamous woman, and now I was in danger of becoming the slave of an angel. Such were my reflections whilst Sara was fainting, but it was necessary for me to consider the matter at my leisure.

There was a sale of valuable articles in the city, the means taken for disposing of them being a lottery. Sara had read the announcement, and I asked her with her mother and sister to come with me and take part in it. I had not much trouble in obtaining their consent, and we found ourselves in distinguished company, among the persons present being the Countess of Harrington, Lady Stanhope, and Emilie and her daughters. Emilie had a strange case before the courts. She had given information to the police that her husband had been robbed of six thousand pounds, though everyone said that she herself was the thief.

Madame M— F— did not take a ticket, but she allowed me to take tickets for her daughters, who were in high glee, since for ten or twelve guineas they got articles worth sixty.

Every day I was more taken with Sara; but feeling sure that I should only obtain slight favours from her, I thought it was time to come to an explanation. So after supper I said that as it was not certain that Sara could become my wife I had determined not to accompany them to Berne. The father told me I was very wise, and that I could still correspond with his daughter, Sara said nothing, but I could see she was much grieved.

I passed a dreadful night; such an experience was altogether new to me. I weighed Sara's reasons, and they seemed to me to be merely frivolous, which drove me to conclude that my caresses had displeased her.

For the last three days I found myself more than once alone with her; but I was studiously moderate, and she caressed me in a manner that would have made my bliss if I had not already obtained the one great favour. It was at this time I learnt the truth of the maxim that if abstinence is sometimes the spur of love, it has also the contrary effect. Sara had brought my feeling to a pitch of gentle friendship, while an infamous prostitute like the Charpillon, who knew how to renew hope and yet grant nothing, ended by inspiring me with contempt, and finally with hatred.

The family sailed for Ostend, and I accompanied them to the mouth of the Thames. I gave Sara a letter for Madame de W—. This was the name of the learned Hedvig whom she did not know. They afterwards became sisters-in-law, as Sara married a brother of M. de W—, and was happy with him.

Even now I am glad to hear tidings of my old friends and their doings, but the interest I take in such matters is not to be compared to my interest in some obscure story of ancient history. For our contemporaries, the companions, of our youthful follies, we have a kind of contempt, somewhat similar to that which we entertain for ourselves. Four years ago I wrote to Madame G— at Hamburg, and my letter began:

"After a silence of twenty-one years . . ."

She did not deign to reply, and I was by no means displeased. We cared no longer for one another, and it is quite natural that it should be so.

When I tell my reader who Madame G— is, he will be amused. Two years ago I set out for Hamburg, but my good genius made me turn back to Dux; what had I to do at Hamburg?

After my guests were gone I went to the Italian Opera at Covent Garden, and met Goudar, who asked me if I would come to the Sartori's concert. He told me I should see a beautiful young English woman there who spoke Italian. As I had just lost Sara I did not much care about making new acquaintances, but still I was curious to see the young marvel. I indulged my curiosity, and I am glad to say that instead of being amused I was wearied, though the young English woman was pretty enough. A young Livonian, who called himself Baron of Stenau, seemed extremely interested in her. After supper she offered us tickets for the next concert, and I took one for myself and one for Gondar, giving her two guineas, but the Livonian baron took fifty tickets, and gave her a bank note for fifty guineas. I saw by this that he wanted to take the place by storm, and I liked his way of doing it. I supposed him to be rich, without caring to enquire into his means. He made advances to me and we became friends, and the reader will see in due time what a fatal acquaintance he was.

One day as I was walking with Goudar in Hyde Park he left me to speak to two ladies who seemed pretty.

He was not long absent, and said, when he rejoined me,—

"A Hanoverian lady, a widow and the mother of five daughters, came to England two months ago with her whole family. She lives close by, and is occupied in soliciting compensation from the Government for any injury that was done her by the passage of the Duke of Cumberland's army. The mother herself is sick and never leaves her bed; she sends her two eldest daughters to petition the Government, and they are the two young ladies you have just seen. They have not met with any success. The eldest daughter is twenty-two, and the youngest fourteen; they are all pretty and can speak English, French, and German equally well, and are always glad to see visitors. I had been to visit them myself, but as I gave them nothing I do not care to go there alone a second time. If you like, however, I can introduce you."

"You irritate my curiosity. Come along, but if the one that pleases me is not complaisant she shall have nothing."

"They will not even allow one to take them by the hand."

"They are Charpillons, I suppose."

"It looks like it. But you won't see any men there:"

We were shewn into a large room where I noticed three pretty girls and an evil-looking man. I began with the usual compliments, to which the girls replied politely, but with an air of great sadness.

Goudar spoke to the man, and then came to me shrugging his shoulders, and saying,—

"We have come at a sad time. That man is a bailiff who has come to take the mother to prison if she can't pay her landlord the twenty guineas' rent she owes him, and they haven't got a farthing. When the mother has been sent to prison the landlord will no doubt turn the girls out of doors."

"They can live with their mother for nothing."

"Not at all. If they have got the money they can have their meals in prison, but no one is allowed to live in a prison except the prisoners."

I asked one of them where her sisters were.

"They have gone out, to look for money, for the landlord won't accept any surety, and we have nothing to sell."

"All this is very sad; what does your mother say?"

"She only weeps, and yet, though she is ill and cannot leave her bed, they are going to take her to prison. By way of consolation the landlord says he will have her carried."

"It is very hard. But your looks please me, mademoiselle, and if you will be kind I may be able to extricate you from the difficulty."

"I do not know what you mean by 'kind.'"

"Your mother will understand; go and ask her."

"Sir, you do not know us; we are honest girls, and ladies of position besides."

With these words the young woman turned her back on me, and began to weep again. The two others, who were quite as pretty, stood straight up and said not a word. Goudar whispered to me in Italian that unless we did something for them we should cut but a sorry figure there; and I was cruel enough to go away without saying a word.

CHAPTER XV

The Hanoverians

As we were leaving the house we met the two eldest sisters, who came home looking very sad. I was struck by their beauty, and extremely surprised to hear myself greeted by one of them, who said,—

"It is M. the Chevalier de Seingalt."

"Himself, mademoiselle, and sorely grieved at your misfortune."

"Be kind enough to come in again for a moment."

"I am sorry to say that I have an important engagement."

"I will not keep you for longer than a quarter of an hour."

I could not refuse so small a favour, and she employed the time in telling me how unfortunate they had been in Hanover, how they had come to London to obtain compensation, of their failure, their debts, the cruelty of the landlord, their mother's illness, the prison that awaited her, the likelihood of their being cast into the street, and the cruelty of all their acquaintances.

"We have nothing to sell, and all our resources consist of two shillings, which we shall have to spend on bread, on which we live."

"Who are your friends? How can they abandon you at such a time?"

She mentioned several names—among others, Lord Baltimore, Marquis Carracioli, the Neapolitan ambassador, and Lord Pembroke.

"I can't believe it," said I, "for I know the two last noblemen to be both rich and generous. There must be some good reason for their conduct, since you are beautiful; and for these gentlemen beauty is a bill to be honoured on sight."

"Yes, there is a reason. These rich noblemen abandon us with contempt. They refuse to take pity on us because we refuse to yield to their guilty passion."

"That is to say, they have taken a fancy to you, and as you will not have pity on them they refuse to have pity on you. Is it not so?"

"That is exactly the situation."

"Then I think they are in the right."

"In the right?"

"Yes, I am quite of their opinion. We leave you to enjoy your sense of virtue, and we spend our money in procuring those favours which you refuse us. Your misfortune really is your prettiness, if you were ugly you would get twenty guineas fast enough. I would give you the money myself, and the action would be put down to benevolence; whereas, as the case stands, if I were to give you anything it would be thought that I was actuated by the hope of favours to come, and I should be laughed at, and deservedly, as a dupe."

I felt that this was the proper way to speak to the girl, whose eloquence in pleading her cause was simply wonderful.

She did not reply to my oration, and I asked her how she came to know me.

"I saw you at Richmond with the Charpillon."

"She cost me two thousand guineas, and I got nothing for my money; but I have profited by the lesson, and in future I shall never pay in advance."

Just then her mother called her, and, begging me to wait a moment, she went into her room, and returned almost directly with the request that I would come and speak to the invalid.

I found her sitting up in her bed; she looked about forty-five, and still preserved traces of her former beauty; her countenance bore the imprint of sadness, but had no marks of sickness whatsoever. Her brilliant and expressive eyes, her intellectual face, and a suggestion of craft about her, all bade me

be on my guard, and a sort of false likeness to the Charpillon's mother made me still more cautious, and fortified me in my resolution to give no heed to the appeals of pity.

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