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THE ADVENTURES OF HARRY RICHMOND

By George Meredith

BOOK 4.

XXIII. MY TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY

CHAPTER XXIII

MY TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY

Books and dreams, like the two rivers cited by my father, flowed side by side in me without mixing; and which the bright Rhone was, which the brown Arve, needs not to be told to those who know anything of youth; they were destined to intermingle soon enough. I read well, for I felt ground and had mounting views; the real world, and the mind and passions of the world, grew visible to me. My tutor pleased the squire immensely by calling me matter-of-fact. In philosophy and history I hated speculation; but nothing was too fantastic for my ideas of possible occurrences. Once away from books, I carried a head that shot rockets to the farthest hills.

My dear friend Temple was at sea, or I should have had one near me to detect and control the springs of nonsense. I was deemed a remarkably quiet sober thoughtful young man, acquiescent in all schemes projected for my welfare. The squire would have liked to see me courting the girl of his heart, as he termed Janet Ilchester, a little more demonstratively. We had, however, come to the understanding that I was to travel before settling. Traditional notions of the importance of the Grand Tour in the education of gentlemen led him to consent to my taking a year on the Continent accompanied by my tutor. He wanted some one, he said, to represent him when I was out over there; which signified that he wanted some one to keep my father in check; but as the Rev. Ambrose Peterborough, successor to the Rev. Simon Hart, was hazy and manageable, I did not object. Such faith had the quiet thoughtful young man at Riversley in the convulsions of the future, the whirlwinds and whirlpools spinning for him and all connected with him, that he did not object to hear his name and Janet's coupled, though he had not a spark of love for her.

I tried to realize to myself the general opinion that she was handsome. Her eyebrows were thick and level and long; her eyes direct in their gaze, of a flinty blue, with dark lashes; her nose firm, her lips fullish, firm when joined; her shape straight, moderately flexible. But she had no softness; she could admire herself in my presence; she claimed possession of me openly, and at the same time openly provoked a siege from the remainder of my sex: she was not maidenly. She caught imagination by the sleeve, and shut it between square whitewashed walls.

Heriot thought her not only handsome, but comparable to Mrs. William Bulsted, our Julia Rippenger of old. At his meeting with Julia, her delicious loss of colour made her seem to me one of the loveliest women on earth. Janet never lost colour, rarely blushed; she touched neither nerve nor fancy.

'You want a rousing coquette,' said Heriot; 'you won't be happy till you 've been racked by that nice instrument of torture, and the fair Bulsted will do it for you if you like. You don't want a snake or a common serpent, you want a Python.'

I wanted bloom and mystery, a woman shifting like the light with evening and night and dawn, and sudden fire. Janet was bald to the heart inhabiting me then, as if quite shaven. She could speak her affectionate mind as plain as print, and it was dull print facing me, not the arches of the sunset. Julia had only to lisp, 'my husband,' to startle and agitate me beyond expression. She said simple things--'I slept well last night,' or ' I dreamed,' or ' I shivered,' and plunged me headlong down impenetrable forests. The mould of her mouth to a reluctant 'No,' and her almost invariable drawing in of her breath with a 'Yes,' surcharged the everyday monosyllables with meanings of life and death. At last I was reduced to tell her, seeing that she reproached my coldness for Janet, how much I wished Janet resembled her. Her Irish eyes lightened: 'Me! Harry'; then they shadowed: 'She is worth ten of me.' Such pathetic humility tempted me to exalt her supremely.

I talked like a boy, feeling like a man: she behaved like a woman, blushing like a girl.

'Julia! I can never call you Mrs. Bulsted.'

'You have an affection for my husband, have you not, Harry?'

Of a season when this was adorable language to me, the indication is sufficient. Riding out perfectly crazed by it, I met Kiomi, and transferred my emotions. The squire had paid her people an annual sum to keep away from our neighbourhood, while there was a chance of my taking to gipsy life. They had come back to their old camping-ground, rather dissatisfied with the squire.

'Speak to him yourself, Kiomi,' said I; 'whatever you ask for, he can't refuse anything to such eyes as yours.'

'You!' she rallied me; 'why can't you talk sensible stuff!'

She had grown a superb savage, proof against weather and compliments. Her face was like an Egyptian sky fronting night. The strong old Eastern blood put ruddy flame for the red colour; tawny olive edged from the red; rare vivid yellow, all but amber. The light that first looks down upon the fallen sun was her complexion above the brows, and round the cheeks, the neck's nape, the throat, and the firm bosom prompt to lift and sink with her vigour of speech, as her eyes were to flash and darken. Meeting her you swore she was the personification of wandering Asia. There was

no question of beauty and grace, for these have laws. The curve of her brows broke like a beaten wave; the lips and nostrils were wide, tragic in repose. But when she laughed she illuminated you; where she stepped she made the earth hers. She was as fresh of her East as the morning when her ancient people struck tents in the track of their shadows. I write of her in the style consonant to my ideas of her at the time. I would have carried her off on the impulse and lived her life, merely to have had such a picture moving in my sight, and call it mine.

'You're not married?' I said, ludicrously faintly.

'I 've not seen the man I'd marry,' she answered, grinning scorn.

The prizefighter had adopted drinking for his pursuit; one of her aunts was dead, and she was in quest of money to bury the dead woman with the conventional ceremonies and shows of respect dear to the hearts of gipsies, whose sense of propriety and adherence to customs are a sentiment indulged by them to a degree unknown to the stabled classes. In fact, they have no other which does not come under the definite title of pride;--pride in their physical prowess, their dexterity, ingenuity, and tricksiness, and their purity of blood. Kiomi confessed she had hoped to meet me; confessed next that she had been waiting to jump out on me: and next that she had sat in a tree watching the Grange yesterday for six hours; and all for money to do honour to her dead relative, poor little soul! Heriot and I joined the decent procession to the grave. Her people had some quarrel with the Durstan villagers, and she feared the scandal of being pelted on the way to the church. I knew that nothing of the sort would happen if I was present. Kiomi walked humbly with her head bent, leaving me the thick rippling coarse black locks of her hair for a mark of observation. We were entertained at her camp in the afternoon. I saw no sign of intelligence between her and Heriot. On my asking her, the day before, if she remembered him, she said, 'I do, I'm dangerous for that young man.' Heriot's comment on her was impressed on me by his choosing to call her 'a fine doe leopard,' and maintaining that it was a defensible phrase.

She was swept from my amorous mind by Mabel Sweetwinter, the miller's daughter of Dipwell. This was a Saxon beauty in full bud, yellow as mid-May, with the eyes of opening June. Beauty, you will say, is easily painted in that style. But the sort of beauty suits the style, and the well-worn comparisons express the well-known type. Beside Kiomi she was like a rich meadow on the border of the heaths.

We saw them together on my twenty-first birthday. To my shame I awoke in the early morning at Riversley, forgetful of my father's old appointment for the great Dipwell feast. Not long after sunrise, when blackbirds peck the lawns, and swallows are out from under eaves to the flood's face, I was hailed by Janet Ilchester beneath my open windows. I knew she had a bet with the squire that she would be the first to hail me legal man, and was prepared for it. She sat on horseback alone in the hazy dewy Midsummer morning, giving clear note:

'Whoop! Harry Richmond! halloo!' To which I tossed her a fox's brush,

having a jewelled bracelet pendant. She missed it and let it lie, and laughed.

'No, no; it's foxie himself!--anybody may have the brush. You're dressed, are you, Harry? You were sure I should come? A thousand happy years to you, and me to see them, if you don't mind. I 'm first to wish it, I'm certain. I was awake at three, out at halfpast, over Durstan heath, across Eckerthy's fields--we'll pay the old man for damage--down by the plantation, Bran and Sailor at my heels, and here I am. Crow, cocks! bark, dogs! up, larks! I said I'd be first. And now I 'm round to stables to stir up Uberly. Don't be tardy, Mr. Harry, and we'll be Commodore Arson and his crew before the world's awake.'

We rode out for a couple of hours, and had to knock at a farmhouse for milk and bread. Possibly a sense of independence, owing to the snatching of a meal in midflight away from home, made Janet exclaim that she would gladly be out all day. Such freaks were exceedingly to my taste. Then I remembered Dipwell, and sure that my father would be there, though he had not written of it, I proposed to ride over. She pleaded for the horses and the squire alternately. Feasting was arranged at Riversley, as well as at Dipwell, and she said musically,

'Harry, the squire is a very old man, and you may not have many more chances of pleasing him. To-day do, do! To-morrow, ride to your father, if you must: of course you must if you think it right; but don't go this day.'

'Not upset my fortune, Janet?'

'Don't hurt the kind old man's heart to-day.'

'Oh! you're the girl of his heart, I know.'

'Well, Harry, you have first place, and I want you to keep it.'

'But here's an oath I've sworn to my father.'

'He should not have exacted it, I think.'

'I promised him when I was a youngster.'

'Then be wiser now, Harry.'

'You have brilliant ideas of the sacredness of engagements.'

'I think I have common sense, that's all.'

'This is a matter of feeling.'

'It seems that you forgot it, though!'

Kiomi's tents on Durstan heath rose into view. I controlled my verbal retort upon Janet to lead her up to the gipsy girl, for whom she had an

odd aversion, dating from childhood. Kiomi undertook to ride to Dipwell, a distance of thirty miles, and carry the message that I would be there by nightfall. Tears were on Janet's resolute face as we cantered home.

After breakfast the squire introduced me to his lawyer, Mr. Burgin, who, closeted alone with me, said formally,

'Mr. Harry Richmond, you are Squire Beltham's grandson, his sole male descendant, and you are established at present, and as far as we can apprehend for the future, as the direct heir to the whole of his property, which is enormous now, and likely to increase so long as he lives. You may not be aware that your grandfather has a most sagacious eye for business. Had he not been born a rich man he would still have been one of our very greatest millionaires. He has rarely invested but to double his capital; never speculated but to succeed. He may not understand men quite so well, but then he trusts none entirely; so if there is a chasm in his intelligence, there is a bridge thrown across it. The metaphor is obscure perhaps: you will doubtless see my meaning. He knows how to go on his road without being cheated. For himself, your grandfather, Mr. Harry, is the soul of honour. Now, I have to explain certain family matters. The squire's wife, your maternal grandmother, was a rich heiress. Part of her money was settled on her to descend to her children by reversion upon her death. What she herself possessed she bequeathed to them in reversion likewise to their children. Thus at your maternal grandmother's death, your mother and your aunt inherited money to use as their own, and the interest of money tied fast in reversion to their children (in case of marriage) after their death. Your grandfather, as your natural guardian, has left the annual interest of your money to accumulate, and now you are of age he hands it to you, as you see, without much delay. Thus you become this day the possessor of seventy thousand pounds, respecting the disposal of which I am here to take your orders. Ahem!--as to the remaining property of your mother's--the sum held by her for her own use, I mean, it devolved to her husband, your father, who, it is probable, will furnish you an account of it--ah! --at his leisure--ah! um! And now, in addition, Mr. Harry, I have the squire's commands to speak to you as a man of business, on what may be deemed a delicate subject, though from the business point of view no peculiar delicacy should pertain to it. Your grandfather will settle on you estates and money to the value of twenty thousand pounds per annum on the day of your union with a young lady in this district, Miss Janet Ilchester. He undertakes likewise to provide her pin-money. Also, let me observe, that it is his request--but he makes no stipulation of it that you will ultimately assume the name of Beltham, subscribing yourself Harry Lepel Richmond Beltham; or, if it pleases you, Richmond-Beltham, with the junction hyphen. Needless to say, he leaves it to your decision. And now, Mr. Harry, I have done, and may most cordially congratulate you on the blessings it has pleased a kind and discerning Providence to shower on your head.'

None so grimly ironical as the obsequious! I thought of Burgin's 'discerning' providence (he spoke with all professional sincerity) in after days.

On the occasion I thought of nothing but the squire's straight-forwardness, and grieved to have to wound him. Janet helped me. She hinted with a bashfulness, quite new to her, that I must go through some ceremony. Guessing what it was, I saluted her on the cheek. The squire observed that a kiss of that sort might as well have been planted on her back hair. 'But,' said he, and wisely, 'I'd rather have the girl worth ten of you, than you be more than her match. Girls like my girl here are precious.' Owing to her intercession, he winked at my departure after I had done duty among the tenants; he barely betrayed his vexation, and it must have been excessive.

Heriot and I rode over to Dipwell. Next night we rode back by moonlight with matter for a year of laughter, singing like two Arabian poets praises of dark and fair, challengeing one to rival the other. Kiomi! Mabel! we shouted separately. We had just seen the dregs of the last of the birthday Burgundy.

'Kiomi! what a splendid panther she is!' cries Heriot; and I: 'Teeth and claws, and a skin like a burnt patch on a common! Mabel's like a wonderful sunflower.'

'Butter and eggs! old Richie, and about as much fire as a rushlight. If the race were Fat she 'd beat the world.'

'Heriot, I give you my word of honour, the very look of her 's eternal Summer. Kiomi rings thin--she tinkles; it 's the difference between metal and flesh.'

'Did she tinkle, as you call it, when that fellow Destrier, confound him! touched her?'

'The little cat! Did you notice Mabel's blush?'

'How could I help it? We've all had a dozen apiece. You saw little Kiomi curled up under the hop and briony?'

'I took her for a dead jackdaw.'

'I took her for what she is, and she may slap, scream, tear, and bite, I 'll take her yet-and all her tribe crying thief, by way of a diversion. She and I are footed a pair.'

His impetuosity surpassed mine so much that I fell to brooding on the superior image of my charmer. The result was, I could not keep away from her. I managed to get home with leaden limbs. Next day I was back at Dipwell.

Such guilt as I have to answer for I may avow. I made violent love to this silly country beauty, and held every advantage over her other flatterers. She had met me on the evening of the great twenty-first, she and a line of damsels dressed in white and wearing wreaths, and I had claimed the privilege of saluting her. The chief superintendent of the festivities, my father's old cook, Monsieur Alphonse, turned twilight

into noonday with a sheaf of rockets at the moment my lips brushed her cheek. It was a kiss marred; I claimed to amend it. Besides, we had been bosom friends in childhood. My wonder at the growth of the rose I had left but an insignificant thorny shoot was exquisite natural flattery, sweet reason, to which she could not say nonsense. At each step we trod on souvenirs, innocent in themselves, had they recurred to childish minds. The whisper, 'Hark! it's sunset, Mabel, Martha Thresher calls,' clouded her face with stormy sunset colours. I respected Martha even then for boldly speaking to me on the girl's behalf. Mrs. Waddy's courage failed. John Thresher and Mark Sweetwinter were overcome by my father's princely prodigality; their heads were turned, they appeared to have assumed that I could do no wrong. To cut short the episode, some one wrote to the squire in uncouth English, telling him I was courting a country lass, and he at once started me for the Continent. We had some conversation on money before parting. The squire allowed me a thousand a year, independent of my own income. He counselled prudence, warned me that I was on my trial, and giving me his word of honour that he should not spy into my Bank accounts, desired me to be worthy of the trust reposed in me. Speculation he forbade. I left him satisfied with the assurance that I meant to make my grand tour neither as a merchant, a gambler, nor a rake, but simply as a plain English gentleman.

'There's nothing better in the world than that,' said he.

Arrived in London, I left my travelling companion, the Rev. Ambrose Peterborough, sipping his Port at the hotel, and rushed down to Dipwell, shot a pebble at Mabel's window by morning twilight, and soon had her face at the casement. But it was a cloudy and rainbeaten face. She pointed toward the farm, saying that my father was there.

'Has he grieved you, Mabel?' I asked softly.

'Oh, no, not he! he wouldn't, he couldn't; he talked right. Oh, go, go: for I haven't a foot to move. And don't speak so soft; I can't bear kindness.'

My father in admonishing her had done it tenderly, I was sure. Tenderness was the weapon which had wounded her, and so she shrank from it; and if I had reproached and abused her she might, perhaps, have obeyed me by coming out, not to return. She was deaf. I kissed my hand to her regretfully; a condition of spirit gradually dissolved by the haunting phantom of her forehead and mouth crumpling up for fresh floods of tears. Had she concealed that vision with her handkerchief, I might have waited to see her before I saw my father. He soon changed the set of the current.

'Our little Mabel here,' he said, 'is an inflammable puss, I fear. By the way, talking of girls, I have a surprise for you. Remind me of it when we touch Ostend. We may want a yacht there to entertain high company. I have set inquiries afloat for the hire of a schooner. This child Mabel can read and write, I suppose? Best write no letters, boy. Do not make old Dipwell a thorny bed. I have a portrait to show you, Richie. A portrait! I think you will say the original was worthy of

more than to be taken up and thrown away like a weed. You see, Richie,
girls have only one chance in the world, and good God! to ruin that--no,
no. You shall see this portrait. A pretty little cow-like Mabel, I
grant you. But to have her on the conscience! What a coronet to wear!
My young Lord Destrier--you will remember him as one of our guests here;
I brought him to make your acquaintance; well, he would not be
scrupulous, it is possible. Ay, but compare yourself with him, Richie!
and you and I, let us love one another and have no nettles.'

He flourished me away to London, into new spheres of fancy. He was
irresistible.

In a London Club I was led up to the miniature of a youthful woman,
singular for her endearing beauty Her cheeks were merry red, her lips
lively with the spark of laughter, her eyes in good union with them,
showing you the laughter was gentle; eyes of overflowing blue light.

'Who is she?' I asked.

The old-fashioned building of the powdered hair counselled me to add,
'Who was she?'

Captain DeWitt, though a member of the Club, seemed unable to inform me.
His glance consulted my father. He hummed and drawled, and said:
'Mistress Anastasia Dewsbury; that was her name.'

'She does not look a grandmother,' said my father.

'She would be one by this time, I dare say,' said I.

We gazed in silence.

'Yes!' he sighed. 'She was a charming actress, and one of the best of
women. A noble-minded young woman! A woman of cultivation and genius!
Do you see a broken heart in that face? No? Very well. A walk will
take us to her grave. She died early.'

I was breathing 'Who?' when he said, 'She was my mother, my dear.'

It was piteous.

We walked to an old worn flat stone in a London street, where under I had
to imagine those features of beautiful humanity lying shut from us.

She had suffered in life miserably.

CHAPTER XXIV

I MEET THE PRINCESS

Hearing that I had not slept at the hotel, the Rev. Ambrose rushed down to Riversley with melancholy ejaculations, and was made to rebound by the squire's contemptuous recommendation to him to learn to know something of the spirit of young bloods, seeing that he had the nominal charge of one, and to preach his sermon in secret, if he would be sermonizing out of church. The good gentleman had not exactly understood his duties, or how to conduct them. Far from objecting to find me in company with my father, as he would otherwise have done by transmitting information of that fact to Riversley, he now congratulated himself on it, and after the two had conversed apart, cordially agreed to our scheme of travelling together. The squire had sickened him. I believe that by comparison he saw in my father a better friend of youth.

'We shall not be the worse for a ghostly adviser at hand,' my father said to me with his quaintest air of gravity and humour mixed, which was not insincerely grave, for the humour was unconscious. 'An accredited casuist may frequently be a treasure. And I avow it, I like to travel with my private chaplain.'

Mr. Peterborough's temporary absence had allowed me time for getting ample funds placed at our disposal through the agency of my father's solicitors, Messrs. Dettermain and Newson, whom I already knew from certain transactions with them on his behalf. They were profoundly courteous to me, and showed me his box, and alluded to his Case--a long one, and a lamentable, I was taught to apprehend, by their lugubriously professional tone about it. The question was naturally prompted in me, 'Why do you not go on with it?'

'Want of funds.'

'There's no necessity to name that now,' I insisted. But my father desired them to postpone any further exposition of the case, saying, 'Pleasure first, business by-and-by. That, I take it, is in the order of our great mother Nature, gentlemen. I will not have him help shoulder his father's pack until he has had his, fill of entertainment.'

A smooth voyage brought us in view of the towers of Ostend at sunrise. Standing with my father on deck, and gazing on this fringe of the grand romantic Continent, I remembered our old travels, and felt myself bound to him indissolubly, ashamed of my recent critical probings of his character. My boy's love for him returned in full force. I was sufficiently cognizant of his history to know that he kept his head erect, lighted by the fire of his robust heart in the thick of overhanging natal clouds. As the way is with men when they are too happy to be sentimental, I chattered of anything but my feelings.

'What a capital idea that was of yours to bring down old Alphonse to Dipwell! You should have heard old John Thresher and Mark Sweetwinter and the others grumbling at the interference of "French frogs;" with their beef, though Alphonse vowed he only ordered the ox to be turned faster, and he dressed their potatoes in six different ways. I doubt if Dipwell has composed itself yet. You know I sat for president in their tent while the beef went its first round; and Alphonse was in an awful

hurry to drag me into what he called the royal tent. By the way, you should have hauled the standard down at sunset.'

'Not when the son had not come down among us,' said my father, smiling.

'Well, I forgot to tell you about Alphonse. By the way, we'll have him in our service. There was he plucking at me: "Monsieur Henri-Richie, Monsieur Henri-Richie! mille complimens . . . et les potages, Monsieur! --a la Camerani, a la tortue, aux petits pois . . . c'est en vrai artiste que j'ai su tout retarder jusqu'au dernier moment . . . . Monsieur! cher Monsieur Henri-Richie, je vous en supplie, laissez-la, ces planteurs de choux." And John Thresher, as spokesman for the rest: "Master Harry, we beg to say, in my name, we can't masticate comfortably while we've got a notion Mr. Frenchman he 's present here to play his Frenchified tricks with our plain wholesome dishes. Our opinion is, he don't know beef from hedgehog; and let him trim 'em, and egg 'em,' and bread-crumb 'em, and pound the mess all his might, and then tak' and roll 'em into balls, we say we wun't, for we can't make English muscle out o' that."--And Alphonse, quite indifferent to the vulgar: "He! mais pensez donc au Papa, Monsieur Henri-Richie, sans doute il a une sante de fer: mais encore faut-il lui menager le suc gastrique, pancreatique . . . ."'

'Ay, ay!' laughed my father; 'what sets you thinking of Alphonse?'

'I suppose because I shall have to be speaking French in an hour.'

'German, Richie, German.'

'But these Belgians speak French.'

'Such French as it is. You will, however, be engaged in a German conversation first, I suspect.'

'Very well, I'll stumble on. I don't much like it.'

'In six hours from this second of time, Richie, boy, I undertake to warrant you fonder of the German tongue than of any other spoken language.'

I looked at him. He gave me a broad pleasant smile, without sign of a jest lurking in one corner.

The scene attracted me. Laughing fishwife faces radiant with sea-bloom in among the weedy pier-piles, and sombre blue-cheeked officers of the douane, with their double row of buttons extending the breadth of their shoulders. My father won Mr. Peterborough's approval by declaring cigars which he might easily have passed.

'And now, sir,'--he used the commanding unction of a lady's doctor,--'you to bed, and a short repose. We will, if it pleases you, breakfast at eight. I have a surprise for Mr. Richie. We are about to beat the drum in the market-place, and sing out for echoes.'

’Indeed, sir?’ said the simple man.

’I promise you we shall not disturb you, Mr. Peterborough. You have reached that middle age, have you not, when sleep is, so to put it, your capital? And your activity is the interest you draw from it to live on. You have three good hours. So, then, till we meet at the breakfast-table.’

My father’s first proceeding at the hotel was to examine the list of visitors. He questioned one of the waiters aside, took information from him, and seized my arm rather tremulously, saying,

’They are here. ’Tis as I expected. And she is taking the morning breath of sea-air on the dunes. Come, Richie, come.’

’Who’s the "she"?’ I asked incuriously.

’Well, she is young, she is of high birth, she is charming. We have a crowned head or two here. I observe in you, Richie, an extraordinary deficiency of memory. She has had an illness; Neptune speed her recovery! Now for a turn at our German. Die Strassen ruhen; die Stadt schlaft; aber dort, siehst Du, dort liegt das blaue Meer, das nimmer-schlafende! She is gazing on it, and breathing it, Richie. Ach! ihr jauchzende Seejungfern. On my soul, I expect to see the very loveliest of her sex!

You must not be dismayed at pale cheeks-blasse Wangen. Her illness has been alarming. Why, this air is the top of life; it will, and it shall, revive her. How will she address him?--"Freund," in my presence, perchance: she has her invalid’s privilege. "Theure Prinzessin" you might venture on. No ice! Ay, there she is!’

Solitary, on the long level of the sand-bank, I perceived a group that became discernible as three persons attached to an invalid’s chair, moving leisurely toward us. I was in the state of mind between divination and doubt when the riddle is not impossible to read, would but the heart cease its hurry an instant; a tumbled sky where the break is coming. It came. The dear old days of my wanderings with Temple framed her face. I knew her without need of pause or retrospect. The crocus raising its cup pointed as when it pierced the earth, and the crocus stretched out on earth, wounded by frost, is the same flower. The face was the same, though the features were changed. Unaltered in expression, but wan, and the kind blue eyes large upon lean brows, her aspect was that of one who had been half caught away and still shook faintly in the relaxing invisible grasp.

We stopped at a distance of half-a-dozen paces to allow her time for recollection. She eyed us softly in a fixed manner, while the sea-wind blew her thick redbrown hair to threads on her cheek. Colour on the fair skin told us we were recognized.

’Princess Ottilia!’ said my father.

'It is I, my friend,' she answered. 'And you?'

'With more health than I am in need of, dearest princess.'

'And he?'

'Harry Richmond! my son, now of age, commencing his tour; and he has not forgotten the farewell bunch of violets.'

Her eyelids gently lifted, asking me.

'Nor the mount you did me the honour to give me on the little Hungarian,' said I.

'How nice this sea-air is!' she spoke in English. 'England and sea go together in my thoughts. And you are here! I have been down very low, near the lowest. But your good old sea makes me breathe again. I want to toss on it. Have you yet seen the Markgrafin?'

My father explained that we had just landed from the boat.

'Is our meeting, then, an accident?'

'Dear princess, I heard of your being out by the shore.'

'Ah! kind: and you walked to meet me? I love that as well, though I love chance. And it is chance that brings you here! I looked out on the boat from England while they were dressing me: I cannot have too much of the morning, for then I have all to myself: sea and sky and I. The night people are all asleep, and you come like an old Marchen.'

Her eyelids dropped without closing.

'Speak no more to her just at present,' said an English voice, Miss Silbey's. Schwartz, the huge dragoon, whose big black horse hung near him in my memory like a phantom, pulled the chair at a quiet pace, head downward. A young girl clad in plain black walked beside Miss Sibley, following the wheels.

'Danger is over,' Miss Sibley answered my gaze. 'She is convalescent. You see how weak she is.'

I praised the lady for what I deemed her great merit in not having quitted the service of the princess.

'Oh!' said she, 'my adieux to Sarkeld were uttered years ago. But when I heard of her fall from the horse I went and nursed her. We were once in dread of her leaving us. She sank as if she had taken some internal injury. It may have been only the shock to her system and the cessation of her accustomed exercise. She has a little over-studied.'

'The margravine?'

'The margravine is really very good and affectionate, and has won my esteem. So you and your father are united at last? We have often talked of you. Oh! that day up by the tower. But, do you know, the statue is positively there now, and no one--no one who had the privilege of beholding the first bronze Albrecht Wohlgemuth, Furst von Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld, no one will admit that the second is half worthy of him. I can feel to this day the leap of the heart in my mouth when the statue dismounted. The prince sulked for a month: the margravine still longer at your father's evasion. She could not make allowance for the impulsive man: such a father; such a son!'

'Thank you, thank you most humbly,' said I, bowing to her shadow of a mock curtsey.

The princess's hand appeared at a side of the chair. We hastened to her.

'Let me laugh, too,' she prayed.

Miss Sibley was about to reply, but stared, and delight sprang to her lips in a quick cry.

'What medicine is this? Why, the light of morning has come to you, my darling!'

'I am better, dearest, better.'

'You sigh, my own.'

'No; I breathe lots, lots of salt air now, and lift like a boat. Ask him--he had a little friend, much shorter than himself, who came the whole way with him out of true friendship--ask him where is the friend?'

Miss Sibley turned her head to me.

'Temple,' said I; 'Temple is a midshipman; he is at sea.'

'That is something to think of,' the princess murmured, and dropped her eyelids a moment. She resumed 'The Grand Seigneur was at Vienna last year, and would not come to Sarkeld, though he knew I was ill.'

My father stooped low.

'The Grand Seigneur, your servant, dear princess, was an Ottoman Turk, and his Grand Vizier advised him to send flowers in his place weekly.'

'I had them, and when we could get those flowers nowhere else,' she replied. 'So it was you! So my friends have been about me.'

During the remainder of the walk I was on one side of the chair, and her little maid on the other, while my father to rearward conversed with Miss Sibley. The princess took a pleasure in telling me that this Aennchen of hers knew me well, and had known me before ever her mistress had seen me. Aennchen was the eldest of the two children Temple and I had eaten

breakfast with in the forester's hut. I felt myself as if in the forest again, merely wondering at the growth of the trees, and the narrowness of my vision in those days.

At parting, the princess said,

'Is my English improved? You smiled at it once. I will ask you when I meet you next.'

'It is my question,' I whispered to my own ears.

She caught the words.

'Why do you say--" It is my question"?'

I was constrained to remind her of her old forms of English speech.

'You remember that? Adieu,' she said.

My father considerately left me to carry on my promenade alone. I crossed the ground she had traversed, noting every feature surrounding it, the curving wheel-track, the thin prickly sand-herbage, the wave-mounds, the sparse wet shells and pebbles, the gleaming flatness of the water, and the vast horizon-boundary of pale flat land level with shore, looking like a dead sister of the sea. By a careful examination of my watch and the sun's altitude, I was able to calculate what would, in all likelihood, have been his height above yonder waves when her chair was turned toward the city, at a point I reached in the track. But of the matter then simultaneously occupying my mind, to recover which was the second supreme task I proposed to myself-of what. I also was thinking upon the stroke of five o'clock, I could recollect nothing. I could not even recollect whether I happened to be looking on sun and waves when she must have had them full and glorious in her face.

CHAPTER XXV

ON BOARD A YACHT

With the heartiest consent I could give, and a blank cheque, my father returned to England to hire forthwith a commodious yacht, fitted and manned. Before going he discoursed of prudence in our expenditure; though not for the sake of the mere money in hand, which was a trifle, barely more than the half of my future income; but that the squire, should he by and by bethink him of inspecting our affairs, might perceive we were not spendthrifts.

'I promised you a surprise, Richie,' said he, 'and you have had it; whether at all equal to your expectations is for you to determine. I was aware of the margravine's intention to bring the princess to these sea-sands; they are famous on the Continent. It was bruited last Winter and

Spring that she would be here in the season for bathing; so I held it likely we should meet. We have, you behold. In point of fact, we owe the good margravine some show of hospitality. The princess has a passion for tossing on the sea. To her a yacht is a thing dropped from the moon. His Highness the prince her father could as soon present her with one as with the moon itself. The illustrious Serenity's revenue is absorbed, my boy, in the state he has to support. As for his daughter's dowry, the young gentleman who anticipates getting one with her, I commend to the practise of his whistling. It will be among the sums you may count, if you are a moderate arithmetician, in groschen. The margravine's income I should reckon to approach twenty thousand per annum, and she proves her honourable sense that she holds it in trust for others by dispersing it rapidly. I fear she loves cards. So, then, I shall go and hire the yacht through Dettermain and Newson, furnish it with piano and swing-cot, etc.; and if the ladies shrink from a cruise they can have an occasional sail. Here are we at their service. I shall be seriously baffled by fortune if I am not back to you at the end of a week. You will take your early morning walk, I presume. On Sunday see that our chaplain, the excellent Mr. Peterborough, officiates for the assembled Protestants of all nations. It excites our English enthusiasm. In addition, son Richie, it is peculiarly our duty. I, at least, hold the view that it is a family duty. Think it over, Richie boy. Providence, you see, has sent us the man. As for me, I feel as if I were in the dawn of one life with all the mature experience of another. I am calm, I am perfectly unexcited, and I tell you, old son, I believe--pick among the highest--our destinies are about the most brilliant of any couple in Great Britain.'

His absence relieved me in spite of my renewed pleasure in his talk; I may call it a thirsty craving to have him inflating me, puffing the deep unillumined treasure-pits of my nature with laborious hints, as mines are filled with air to keep the miners going. While he talked he made these inmost recesses habitable. But the pain lay in my having now and then to utter replies. The task of speaking was hateful. I found a sweetness in brooding unrealizingly over hopes and dreams and possibilities, and I let him go gladly that I might enjoy a week of silence, just taking impressions as they came, like the sands in the ebb-tide. The impression of the morning was always enough for a day's meditation. The green colour and the crimson athwart it, and higher up the pinky lights, flamingo feathers, on a warm half-circle of heaven, in hue between amethyst and milky opal; then the rim of the sun's disc not yet severe; and then the monstrous shadow of tall Schwartz darting at me along the sand, then the princess. This picture, seen at sunrise, lasted till I slept. It stirred no thoughts, conjured no images, it possessed me. In the afternoon the margravine accompanied the princess to a point facing seaward, within hearing of the military band. She did me the favour to tell me that she tolerated me until I should become efficient in German to amuse her, but the dulness of the Belgian city compared with her lively German watering-places compelled her to try my powers of fun in French, and in French I had to do duty, and failed in my office.

'Do you know,' said she, 'that your honourable papa is one in a million? He has the life of a regiment in his ten fingers. What astonishes me is

that he does not make fury in that England of yours--that Lapland! Je ne puffs me passer de cet homme! He offends me, he trifles, he outrages, he dares permit himself to be indignant. Bon! we part, and absence pleads for him with the eloquence of Satan. I am his victim. Does he, then, produce no stir whatever in your England? But what a people! But yes, you resemble us, as bottles--bottles; seulement, you are emptied of your wine. Ce Monsieur Peterbooroo'! Il m'agace les nerfs. It cannot be blood in his veins. One longs to see him cuffed, to see if he has the English lion in him, one knows not where. But you are so, you English, when not intoxicated. And so censorious! You win your battles, they say, upon beer and cordials: it is why you never can follow up a success. Je tiens cela du Marechal Prince B-----. Let that pass. One groans at your intolerable tristesse. La vie en Angleterre est comme un marais. It is a scandal to human nature. It blows fogs, foul vapours, joint-stiffnesses, agues, pestilences, over us here,--yes, here! That is your best side: but your worst is too atrocious! Mon Dieu! Your men-rascals! Your women-rascals!'

'Good soul!' the princess arrested her, 'I beg that you will not abuse England.'

'Have I abused England?' exclaimed the margravine. 'Nay, then, it was because England is shockingly unjust to the most amusing, the most reviving, charming of men. There is he fresh as a green bubbling well, and those English decline to do honour to his source. Now tell me, you!' She addressed me imperiously. 'Are you prosecuting his claims? Are you besieging your Government? What! you are in the season of generosity, an affectionate son, wealthy as a Magyar prince of flocks, herds, mines, and men, and you let him stand in the shade deprived of his birthright? Are you a purse-proud commoner or an imbecile?'

'My whimsy aunt!' the princess interposed again, 'now you have taken to abusing a defenceless Englishman.'

'Nothing of the sort, child. I compliment him on his looks and manners; he is the only one of his race who does not appear to have marched out of a sentinel's box with a pocket-mirror in his hand. I thank him from my soul for not cultivating the national cat's whisker. None can imagine what I suffer from the oppressive sight of his Monsieur Peterbooroo'! And they are of one pattern--the entire nation! He! no, he has the step of a trained blood-horse. Only, as Kaunitz, or somebody, said of Joseph II., or somebody, he thinks or he chews. Englishmen's mouths were clearly not made for more purposes than one. In truth, I am so utterly wearied, I could pray for the diversion of a descent of rain. The life here is as bad as in Rippau. I might just as well be in Rippau doing duty: the silly people complain, I hear. I am gathering dust. These, my dear, these are the experiences which age women at a prodigious rate. I feel chains on my limbs here.'

'Madame, I would,' said I, 'that I were the Perseus to relieve you of your monster Ennui, but he is coming quickly.'

'You see he has his pretty phrases!' cried the margravine; adding

encouragingly, 'S'il nest pas tant sort peu impertinent?'

The advance of some German or Russian nobleman spared me further efforts.

We were on shore, listening to the band in the afternoon, when a sail like a spark of pure white stood on the purple black edge of a storm-cloud. It was the yacht. By sunset it was moored off shore, and at night hung with variegated lamps. Early next morning we went on board. The ladies were astonished at the extent of the vessel, and its luxurious fittings and cunning arrangements. My father, in fact, had negotiated for the hire of the yacht some weeks previously, with his accustomed forethought.

'House and town and fortress provisioned, and moveable at will!' the margravine interjected repeatedly.

The princess was laid on raised pillows in her swingcot under an awning aft, and watched the sailors, the splendid offspring of old sea-fights, as I could observe her spirited fancy conceiving them. They were a set of men to point to for an answer to the margravine's strictures on things English.

'Then, are you the captain, my good Herr Heilbrunn?' the margravine asked my father.

He was dressed in cheerful blue, wearing his cheerfullest air, and seemed strongly inclined for the part of captain, but presented the actual commander of the schooner-yacht, and helped him through the margravine's interrogations.

'All is excellent,--excellent for a day's sail,' she said. 'I have no doubt you could nourish my system for a month, but to deal frankly with you--prepared meats and cold pies!--to face them once is as much as I am capable of.'

'Dear Lady Field-Marshal,' returned my father, 'the sons of Neptune would be of poor account, if they could not furnish you cookery at sea.'

They did, for Alphonse was on board. He and my father had a hot discussion about the margravine's dishes, Alphonse declaring that it was against his conscience to season them pungently, and my father preaching expediency. Alphonse spoke of the artist and his duty to his art, my father of the wise diplomatist who manipulated individuals without any sacrifice of principle. They were partly at play, of course, both having humour.

It ended in the margravine's being enraptured. The delicacy of the invalid's dishes, was beyond praise. 'So, then, we are absolutely better housed and accommodated than on shore!' the margravine made her wonder heard, and from that fell to enthusiasm for the vessel. After a couple of pleasant smooth-sailing days, she consented to cruise off the coasts of France and England. Adieu to the sands. Throughout the cruise she was placable, satisfied with earth and sea, and constantly eulogizing

herself for this novel state of serenity. Cards, and a collection of tripping French books bound in yellow, danced the gavotte with time, which made the flying minutes endurable to her: and for relaxation there was here the view of a shining town dropped between green hills to dip in sea-water, yonder a ship of merchandise or war to speculate upon, trawlers, collier-brigs, sea-birds, wave over wave. No cloud on sun and moon. We had gold and silver in our track, like the believable children of fairyland.

The princess, lying in her hammock-cot on deck, both day and night, or for the greater part of the night, let her eyes feast incessantly on a laughing sea: when she turned them to any of us, pure pleasure sparkled in them. The breezy salt hours were visible ecstasy to her blood. If she spoke it was but to utter a few hurried, happy words, and shrink as you see the lightning behind a cloud-rack, suggestive of fiery swift emotion within, and she gazed away overjoyed at the swoop and plunge of the gannet, the sunny spray, the waves curling crested or down-like. At night a couple of sailors, tender as women, moved her in the cot to her cabin. We heard her voice in the dark of the morning, and her little maid Aennchen came out and was met by me; and I at that hour had the privilege to help move her back to her favourite place, and strap the iron-stand fast, giving the warm-hooded cot room to swing. The keen sensations of a return to health amid unwonted scenes made things magical to her. When she beheld our low green Devon hills she signalled for help to rise, and 'That is England!' she said, summoning to her beautiful clear eyeballs the recollection of her first desire to see my country. Her petition was that the yacht should go in nearer and nearer to the land till she could discern men, women, and children, and their occupations. A fisherman and his wife sat in the porch above their hanging garden, the woman knitting, the man mending his nets, barefooted boys and girls astride the keel of a boat below them. The princess eyed them and wept. 'They give me happiness; I can give them nothing,' she said.

The margravine groaned impatiently at talk of such a dieaway sort.

My father sent a couple of men on shore with a gift of money to their family in the name of the Princess Ottilia. How she thanked him for his prompt ideas! 'It is because you are generous you read one well.'

She had never thanked me. I craved for that vibrating music as of her deep heart penetrated and thrilling, but shrank from grateful words which would have sounded payment. Running before the wind swiftly on a night of phosphorescent sea, when the waves opened to white hollows with frayed white ridges, wreaths of hissing silver, her eyelids closed, and her hand wandered over the silken coverlet to the hammock cloth, and up, in a blind effort to touch. Mine joined to it. Little Aennchen was witness. Ottilia held me softly till her slumber was deep.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN VIEW OF THE HOHENZOLLERN'S BIRTHPLACE

Our cruise came to an end in time to save the margravine from yawning. The last day of it was windless, and we hung in sight of the colourless low Flemish coast for hours, my father tasking his ingenuity to amuse her. He sang with Miss Sibley, rallied Mr. Peterborough, played picquet to lose, threw over the lead line to count the fathoms, and whistling for the breeze, said to me, 'We shall decidedly have to offer her an exhibition of tipsy British seamen as a final resource. The case is grave either way; but we cannot allow the concluding impression to be a dull one.'

It struck me with astonishment to see the vigilant watch she kept over the princess this day, after having left her almost uninterruptedly to my care.

'You are better?' She addressed Ottilia. 'You can sit up? You think you can walk? Then I have acted rightly, nay, judiciously,--I have not made a sacrifice for nothing. I took the cruise, mind you, on your account. You would study yourself to the bone, till you looked like a canary's quill, with that Herr Professor of yours. Now I 've given you a dose of life. Yes, you begin to look like human flesh. Something has done you good.'

The princess flushing scarlet, the margravine cried,

'There's no occasion for you to have the whole British army in your cheeks. Goodness me! what's the meaning of it? Why, you answer me like flags, banners, uhlans' pennons, fullfrocked cardinals !'

My father stepped in.

'Ah, yes,' said the margravine. 'But you little know, my good Roy, the burden of an unmarried princess; and heartily glad shall I be to hand her over to Baroness Turckems. That's her instituted governess, duenna, dragon, what you will. She was born for responsibility, I was not; it makes me miserable. I have had no holiday. True, while she was like one of their wax virgins I had a respite. Fortunately, I hear of you English, that when you fall to sighing, you suck your thumbs and are consoled.'

My father bowed her, and smiled her, and whirled her away from the subject. I heard him say, under his breath, that he had half a mind to issue orders for an allowance of grog to be served out to the sailors on the spot. I suggested, as I conceived in a similar spirit the forcible ducking of Mr. Peterborough. He appeared to entertain and relish the notion in earnest.

'It might do. It would gratify her enormously,' he said, and eyed the complacent clerical gentleman with transparent jealousy of his claims to decent treatment. 'Otherwise, I must confess,' he added, 'I am at a loss. My wits are in the doldrums.'

He went up to Mr. Peterborough, and, with an air of great sincerity and courtesy, requested him in French to create a diversion for her Highness the Margravine of Rippau during the extreme heat of the afternoon by precipitating himself headlong into forty fathoms, either attached or unattached. His art in baffling Mr. Peterborough's attempts to treat the unheard-of request as a jest was extraordinary. The ingenuity of his successive pleas for pressing such a request pertinaciously upon Mr. Peterborough in particular, his fixed eye, yet cordial deferential manner, and the stretch of his forefinger, and argumentative turn of the head--indicative of an armed disputant fully on the alert, and as if it were of profound and momentous importance that he should thoroughly defeat and convince his man--overwhelmed us. Mr. Peterborough, not being supple in French, fell back upon his English with a flickering smile of protestation; but even in his native tongue he could make no head against the tremendous volubility and brief eager pauses besetting him.

The farce was too evanescent for me to reproduce it.

Peterborough turned and fled to his cabin. Half the crew were on the broad grin. The margravine sprang to my father's arm, and entreated him to be her guest in her Austrian mountain summer-seat. Ottilia was now her darling and her comfort. Whether we English youth sucked our thumbs, or sighed furiously, she had evidently ceased to care. Mr. Peterborough assured me at night that he had still a difficulty in persuading himself of my father's absolute sanity, so urgent was the fire of his eye in seconding his preposterous proposal; and, as my father invariably treated with the utmost reserve a farce played out, they never arrived at an understanding about it, beyond a sententious agreement once, in the extreme heat of an Austrian highland valley, that the option of taking a header into sea-water would there be divine.

Our yacht winged her way home. Prince Ernest of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld, accompanied by Baroness Turckems, and Prince Otto, his nephew, son of the Prince of Eisenberg, a captain of Austrian lancers, joined the margravine in Wurtemberg, and we felt immediately that domestic affairs were under a different management. Baroness Turckems relieved the margravine of her guard. She took the princess into custody. Prince Ernest greeted us with some affability; but it was communicated to my father that he expected an apology before he could allow himself to be as absolutely unclouded toward us as the blaze of his titles. My father declined to submit; so the prince inquired of us what our destination was. Down the Danube to the Black Sea and Asia Minor, Greece, Egypt, the Nile, the Desert, India, possibly, and the Himalayas, my father said. The prince bowed. The highest personages, if they cannot travel, are conscious of a sort of airy majesty pertaining to one who can command so wide and far a flight. We were supplicated by the margravine to appease her brother's pride with half a word. My father was firm. The margravine reached her two hands to him. He kissed over them each in turn. They interchanged smart semi-flattering or cutting sentences.

'Good!' she concluded; 'now I sulk you for five years.'

’You would decapitate me, madam, and weep over my astonished head, would you not?’

’Upon my honour, I would,’ she shook herself to reply.

He smiled rather sadly.

’No pathos!’ she implored him.

’Not while I live, madam,’ said he.

At this her countenance underwent a tremour.

’And when that ends . . . friend! well, I shall have had my last laugh in the world.’

Both seemed affected. My father murmured some soothing word.

’Then you do mean to stay with me?’ the margravine caught him up.

’Not in livery, your Highness.’

’To the deuce with you!’ would be a fair translation of the exalted lady’s reply. She railed at his insufferable pride.

’And you were wrong, wrong,’ she pursued. ’You offended the prince mightily: you travestied his most noble ancestor--’

’In your service, may it please you.’

’You offended, offended him, I say, and you haven’t the courage to make reparation. And when I tell you the prince is manageable as your ship, if you will only take and handle the rudder. Do you perceive?’

She turned to me.

’Hither, Mr. Harry; come, persuade him. Why, you do not desire to leave me, do you?’

Much the reverse. But I had to congratulate myself subsequently on having been moderate in the expression of my wishes; for, as my father explained to me, with sufficient lucidity to enlighten my dulness, the margravine was tempting him grossly. She saw more than I did of his plans. She could actually affect to wink at them that she might gain her point, and have her amusement, and live for the hour, treacherously beguiling a hoodwinked pair to suppose her partially blind or wholly complaisant. My father knew her and fenced her.

’Had I yielded,’ he said, when my heart was low after the parting, ’I should have shown her my hand. I do not choose to manage the prince that the margravine may manage me. I pose my pride--immolate my son to it, Richie? I hope not. No. At Vienna we shall receive an invitation to Sarkeld for the winter, if we hear nothing of entreaties to turn aside

to Ischl at Munich. She is sure to entreat me to accompany her on her annual visit to her territory of Rippau, which she detests; and, indeed, there is not a vine in the length and breadth of it. She thought herself broad awake, and I have dosed her with an opiate.'

He squeezed my fingers tenderly. I was in want both of consolation and very delicate handling when we drove out of the little Wurtemberg town: I had not taken any farewell from Ottilia. Baroness Turckems was already exercising her functions of dragon. With the terrible forbidding word 'Repose' she had wafted the princess to her chamber in the evening, and folded her inextricably round and round in the morning. The margravine huffed, the prince icy, Ottilia invisible, I found myself shooting down from the heights of a dream among shattered fragments of my cloud-palace before I well knew that I had left off treading common earth. All my selfish nature cried out to accuse Ottilia. We drove along a dusty country road that lay like a glaring shaft of the desert between vineyards and hills.

'There,' said my father, waving his hand where the hills on our left fell to a distance and threw up a lofty head and neck cut with one white line, 'your Hohenzollerns shot up there. Their castle looks like a tight military stock. Upon my word, their native mountain has the air of a drum major. Mr. Peterborough, have you a mind to climb it? We are at your disposal.'

'Thank you, thank you, sir,' said the Rev. Ambrose, gazing enthusiastically, but daunted by the heat: 'if it is your wish?'

'We have none that is not yours, Mr. Peterborough. You love ruins, and we are adrift just now. I presume we can drive to the foot of the ascent. I should wish my son perhaps to see the source of great houses.'

Here it was that my arm was touched by old Schwartz. He saluted stiffly, and leaning from the saddle on the trot of his horse at an even pace with our postillion, stretched out a bouquet of roses. I seized it palpitating, smelt the roses, and wondered. May a man write of his foolishness?--tears rushed to my eyes. Schwartz was far behind us when my father caught sight of the magical flowers.

'Come!' said he, glowing, 'we will toast the Hohenstaufens and the Hohenzollerns to-night, Richie.'

Later, when I was revelling in fancies sweeter than the perfume of the roses, he pressed their stems reflectively, unbound them, and disclosed a slip of crested paper. On it was written:

'Violets are over.'

Plain words; but a princess had written them, and never did so golden a halo enclose any piece of human handiwork.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TIME OF ROSES

I sat and thrilled from head to foot with a deeper emotion than joy. Not I, but a detached self allied to the careering universe and having life in it.

'Violets are over.'

The first strenuous effort of my mind was to grasp the meaning, subtle as odour, in these words. Innumerable meanings wreathed away unattainable to thought. The finer senses could just perceive them ere they vanished. Then as I grew material, two camps were pitched and two armies prepared to fight to establish one distinct meaning. 'Violets are over, so I send you roses'; she writes you simple fact. Nay, 'Our time of violets is over, now for us the roses'; she gives you heavenly symbolism.

'From violets to roses, so run the seasons.'

Or is it,

'From violets to roses, thus far have we two travelled?'

But would she merely say, 'I have not this kind of flower, and I send you another?'

True, but would she dare to say, 'The violets no longer express my heart; take the roses?'

'Maidenly, and a Princess, yet sweet and grateful, she gives you the gracefullest good speed.

'Noble above all human distinctions, she binds you to herself, if you will it.'

The two armies came into collision, the luck of the day going to the one I sided with.

But it was curiously observable that the opposing force recovered energy from defeat, while mine languished in victory. I headed them alternately, and--it invariably happened so.

'She cannot mean so much as this.'

'She must mean more than that.'

Thus the Absolute and the Symbolical factions struggled on. A princess drew them as the moon the tides.

By degrees they subsided and united, each reserving its view; a point at which I imagined myself to have regained my proper humility. 'The

princess has sent you these flowers out of her homely friendliness; not seeing you to speak her farewell, she, for the very reason that she can do it innocent of any meaning whatsoever, bids you be sure you carry her esteem with you. Is the sun of blue heavens guilty of the shadow it casts? Clear your mind. She means nothing. Warmth and beauty come from her, and are on you for the moment. But full surely she is a thing to be won: she is human: did not her hand like a gentle snake seek yours, and detain it, and bear it away into the heart of her sleep?--Be moderate. Let not a thought or a dream spring from her condescension, lest you do outrage to her noble simplicity. Look on that high Hohenzollern hill-top: she also is of the line of those who help to found illustrious Houses: what are you?'

I turned to my father and stared him in the face. What was he? Were we not losing precious time in not prosecuting his suit? I put this question to him, believing that it would sound as too remote from my thoughts to betray them. He glanced at the roses, and answered gladly,

'Yes!--no, no! we must have our holiday. Mr. Peterborough is for exploring a battle-field in the neighbourhood of Munich. He shall. I wish him to see the Salzkammergut, and have a taste of German Court-life. Allow me to be captain, Richie, will you? I will show you how battles are gained and mountains are scaled. That young Prince Otto of Eisenberg is a fine young fellow. Those Austrian cavalry regiments are good training-schools for the carriage of a young man's head and limbs. I would match my boy against him in the exercises--fencing, shooting, riding.'

'As you did at Bath,' said I.

He replied promptly: 'We might give him Anna Penrhys to marry. English wives are liked here--adored--if they fetch a dowry. Concerning my suit, Richie, enough if it keeps pace with us: and we are not going slow. It is a thing certain. Dettermain and Newson have repeatedly said, "Money, money!' hand us money, and we guarantee you a public recognition." Money we now have. But we cannot be in two fields at once. Is it your desire to return to England?'

'Not at all,' said I, with a chill at the prospect.

'If it is--?' he pressed me, and relenting added: 'I confess I enjoy this Suabian land as much as you do. Indolence is occasionally charming. I am at work, nevertheless. But, Richie, determine not to think little of yourself: there is the main point; believe me, that is half the battle. You, sir, are one of the wealthiest gentlemen in Europe. You are pronouncedly a gentleman. That is what we can say of you at present, as you appear in the world's eye. And you are by descent illustrious. Well, no more of that, but consider if you kneel down, who will decline to put a foot on you? Princes have the habit, and they do it as a matter of course. Challenge them. And they, Richie, are particularly susceptible to pity for the misfortunes of their class--kind, I should say, for class it is not; now I have done. All I tell you is, I intend you, under my guidance, to be happy.'

I thought his remarks the acutest worldly wisdom I had ever heard,--his veiled method of treating my case the shrewdest, delicatest, and most consoling, most inspiring. It had something of the mystical power of the Oracles,--the power which belongs to anonymous writing. Had he disposed of my apparent rival, and exalted me to the level of a princely family, in open speech, he would have conveyed no balm to me--I should have classed it as one confident man's opinion. Disguised and vague, but emphatic, and interpreted by the fine beam of his eye, it was intoxicating; and when he said subsequently, 'Our majority Burgundy was good emperor wine, Richie. You approved it? I laid that vintage down to give you a lesson to show you that my plans come safe to maturity,'--I credited him with a large share of foresight, though I well knew his habit of antedating his sagacity, and could not but smile at the illustration of it.

You perceive my state without rendering it necessary for me to label myself.

I saw her next in a pinewood between Ischl and the Traun. I had climbed the steep hill alone, while my father and Mr. Peterborough drove round the carriage-road to the margravine's white villa. Ottilia was leaning on the arm of Baroness Turckems, walking--a miracle that disentangled her cruelly from my net of fancies. The baroness placed a second hand upon her as soon as I was seen standing in the path. Ottilia's face coloured like the cyclamen at her feet.

'You!' she said.

'I might ask, is it you, princess?'

'Some wonder has been worked, you see.'

'I thank heaven.'

'You had a part in it.'

'The poorest possible.'

'Yet I shall presume to call you Doctor Oceanus,'

'Will you repeat his medicine? The yacht awaits you always.'

'When I am well I study. Do not you?'

'I have never studied in my life.'

'Ah, lose no more time. The yacht is delicious idleness, but it is idleness. I am longing for it now, I am still so very weak. My dear Sibley has left me to be married. She marries a Hanoverian officer. We change countries--I mean,' the princess caught back her tongue, 'she will become German, not compatriot of your ships of war. My English rebukes me. I cease to express . . . It is like my walking, done half

for pride, I think. Baroness, lower me, and let me rest.'

The baroness laid her gently on the dry brown pine-sheddings, and blew a whistle that hung at her girdle, by which old Schwartzy kept out of sight to encourage the princess's delusion of pride in her walking, was summoned. Ottilia had fainted. The baroness shot a suspicious glance at me. 'It comes of this everlasting English talk,' I heard her mutter. She was quick to interpose between me and the form I had once raised and borne undisputedly.

'Schwartz is the princess's attendant, sir,' she said. 'In future, may I request you to talk German?'

The Prince of Eppenwelzen and Prince Otto were shooting in the mountains. The margravine, after conversing with the baroness, received me stiffly. She seemed eager to be rid of us; was barely hospitable. My mind was too confused to take much note of words and signs. I made an appointment to meet my father the day following, and walked away and returned at night, encountered Schwartz and fed on the crumbs of tidings I got from him, a good, rough old faithful fellow, far past the age for sympathy, but he had carried Ottilia when she was an infant, and meant to die in her service. I thought him enviable above most creatures.

His principal anxiety was about my finding sleeping quarters. When he had delivered himself three times over of all that I could lead him to say, I left him still puffing at his pipe. He continued on guard to be in readiness to run for a doctor, should one be wanted. Twice in the night I came across his path. The night was quiet, dark blue, and starry; the morning soft and fragrant. The burden of the night was bearable, but that of daylight I fled from, and all day I was like one expecting a crisis. Laughter, with so much to arouse it, hardly had any foothold within me to stir my wits. For if I said 'Folly!' I did not feel it, and what I felt I did not understand. My heart and head were positively divided. Days and weeks were spent in reconciling them a little; days passed with a pencil and scribbled slips of paper--the lines written with regular commencements and irregular terminations; you know them. Why had Ottilia fainted? She recommended hard study--thinks me idle, worthless; she has a grave intelligence, a serious estimation of life; she thinks me intrinsically of the value of a summer fly. But why did she say, 'We change countries,' and immediately flush, break and falter, lose command of her English, grow pale and swoon; why? With this question my disastrous big heart came thundering up to the closed doors of-comprehension. It was unanswerable. 'We change countries.' That is, she and Miss Sibley change countries, because the English woman marries a German, and the German princess--oh! enormous folly. Pierce it, slay it, trample it under. Is that what the insane heart is big with? Throughout my night-watch I had been free of it, as one who walks meditating in cloisters on a sentence that once issued from divine lips. There was no relief, save in those pencilled lines which gave honest laughter a chance; they stood like such a hasty levy of raw recruits raised for war, going through the goose-step, with pretty accurate shoulders, and feet of distracting degrees of extension, enough to craze a rhythmical drill-sergeant. I exulted at the first reading, shuddered

at the second, and at the third felt desperate, destroyed them and sat staring at vacancy as if I had now lost the power of speech.

At last I flung away idleness and came to a good resolution; and I carried it through. I studied at a famous German university, not far from Hanover. My father, after discussing my project with me from the point of view of amazement, settled himself in the University town, a place of hopeless dulness, where the stones of the streets and the houses seemed to have got their knotty problem to brood over, and never knew holiday. A fire for acquisition possessed me, and soon an ungovernable scorn for English systems of teaching--sound enough for the producing of gentlemen, and perhaps of merchants; but gentlemen rather bare of graces, and merchants not too scientific in finance. Mr. Peterborough conducted the argument against me until my stout display of facts, or it may have been my insolence, combined with the ponderous pressure of the atmosphere upon one who was not imbibing a counteracting force, drove him on a tour among German cathedrals.

Letters from Riversley informed me that my proceedings were approved, though the squire wanted me near him. We offered entertainments to the students on a vast scale. The local newspaper spoke of my father as the great Lord Roy. So it happened that the margravine at Sarkeld heard of us. Returning from a visit to the prince's palace, my father told me that he saw an opportunity for our being useful to the prince, who wanted money to work a newly-discovered coal-mine in his narrow dominions, and he suggested that I might induce the squire to supply it; as a last extremity I could advance the money. Meanwhile he had engaged to accompany the prince in mufti to England to examine into the working of coal-mines, and hire an overseer and workmen to commence operations on the Sarkeld property. It would be obligatory to entertain him fitly in London.

'Certainly,' said I.

'During our absence the margravine will do her best to console you, Richie. The prince chafes at his poverty. We give him a display of wealth in England; here we are particularly discreet. We shall be surer of our ground in time. I set Dettermain and Newson at work. I have written for them to hire a furnished mansion for a couple of months, carriages, horses, lacqueys. But over here we must really be--goodness me! I know how hard it is!--we must hold the reins on ourselves tight. Baroness Turckems is a most estimable person on the side of her duty. Why, the Dragon of Wantley sat on its eggs, you may be convinced! She is a praiseworthy dragon. The side she presents to us is horny, and not so agreeable. Talk German when she is on guard. Further I need not counsel a clever old son. Counsel me, Richie. Would it be adviseable to run the prince down to Riversley?--a Prince!'

'Oh! decidedly not,' was my advice.

'Well, well,' he assented.

I empowered him to sell out Bank stock.

He wrote word from England of a very successful expedition. The prince, travelling under the title of Count Delzenburg, had been suitably entertained, received by Lady Wilts, Serena Marchioness of Edbury, Lady Denewdney, Lady Sampleman, and others. He had visited my grandfather's mine, and that of Miss Penrhys, and was astounded; had said of me that I wanted but a title to be as brilliant a parti as any in Europe.

The margravine must have received orders from her brother to be civil to me; she sent me an imperious invitation from her villa, and for this fruit of my father's diplomacy I yielded him up my daintier feelings, my judgement into the bargain.

Snows of early Spring were on the pinewood country I had traversed with Temple. Ottilia greeted me in health and vivacity. The margravine led me up to her in the very saloon where Temple, my father, and I had sat after the finale of the statue scene, saying--

'Our sea-lieutenant.'

'It delights me to hear he has turned University student,' she said; and in English: 'You have made friends of your books?'

She was dressed in blue velvet to the throat; the hair was brushed from the temples and bound in a simple knot. Her face and speech, fair and unconstrained, had neither shadow nor beam directed specially for me. I replied,

'At least I have been taught to despise idleness.'

'My Professor tells me it is strange for any of your countrymen to love books.'

'We have some good scholars, princess.'

'You have your Bentley and Porson. Oh! I know many of the world's men have grown in England. Who can deny that? What we mean is, your society is not penetrated with learning. But my Professor shall dispute with you. Now you are facile in our German you can defend yourself. He is a deep scholar, broad over tongues and dialects, European, Asiatic-a lion to me, poor little mouse! I am speaking of Herr Professor von Karsteg, lady aunt.'

'Speak intelligibly, and don't drum on my ear with that hybrid language,' rejoined the margravine.

'Hybrid! It is my Herr Professor's word. But English is the choice gathering of languages, and honey is hybrid, unless you condemn the bee to suck at a single flower.'

'Ha! you strain compliments like the poet Fretzel,' the margravine exclaimed. 'Luckily, they're not, addressed to human creatures. You will find the villa dull, Herr Harry Richmond. For my part, every place

is dull to me that your father does not enliven. We receive no company in the prince's absence, so we are utterly cut off from fools; we have simply none about us.'

'The deprivation is one we are immensely sensible of!' said the princess.

'Laugh on! you will some day be aware of their importance in daily life, Ottilia.'

The princess answered: 'If I could hate, it would be such persons.' A sentence that hung in the memory of one knowing himself to be animated by the wildest genius of folly.

We drove to the statue of Prince Albrecht Wohlgemuth, overlooking leagues of snow-roofed branches. Again Ottilia reverted to Temple,

'That dear little friend of yours who wandered out with you to seek your father, and is now a sailor! I cannot forget him. It strikes me as a beautiful piece of the heroism of boys. You both crossed the sea to travel over the whole Continent until you should find him, did you not? What is hard to understand, is your father's not writing to you while he did us the favour to reside at the palace.'

'Roy is a butterfly,' said the margravine.

'That I cannot think.'

'Roy was busy, he was occupied. I won't have him abused. Besides, one can't be always caressing and cajoling one's pretty brats.'

'He is an intensely loving father.'

'Very well; establish that, and what does it matter whether he wrote or not? A good reputation is the best vindication.'

The princess smiled. 'See here, dearest aunty, the two boys passed half the night here, until my Aennchen's father gave them shelter.'

'Apparently he passes half or all the night in the open air everywhere,' said the margravine.

I glanced hurriedly over both faces. The margravine was snuffing her nostrils up contemptuously. The princess had vividly reddened. Her face was luminous over the nest of white fur folding her neck.

'Yes, I must have the taste for it: for when I was a child,' said I, plunging at anything to catch a careless topic, 'I was out in my father's arms through a winter night, and I still look back on it as one of the most delightful I have ever known. I wish I could describe the effect it had on me. A track of blood in the snow could not be brighter.'

The margravine repeated,

’A track of blood in the snow! My good young man, you have excited forms of speech.’

I shuddered. Ottilia divined that her burning blush had involved me. Divination is fiery in the season of blushes, and I, too, fell on the track of her fair spirit, setting out from the transparent betrayal by Schwartz of my night-watch in the pine-wood near the Traun river-falls. My feelings were as if a wave had rolled me helpless to land, at the margravine’s mercy should she put another question. She startled us with a loud outburst of laughter.

’No! no man upon this earth but Roy could have sat that horse I don’t know how many minutes by the clock, as a figure of bronze,’ she exclaimed.

Ottilia and I exchanged a grave look. The gentleness of the old time was sweet to us both: but we had the wish that my father’s extravagant prominency in it might be forgotten.

At the dinner-table I made the acquaintance of the Herr Professor Dr. Julius von Karsteg, tutor to the princess, a grey, broad-headed man, whose chin remained imbedded in his neck-cloth when his eyelids were raised on a speaker. The first impression of him was, that he was chiefly neck-cloth, coat-collar, grand head, and gruffness. He had not joined the ceremonial step from the reception to the dining saloon, but had shuffled in from a side-door. No one paid him any deference save the princess. The margravine had the habit of thrumming the table thrice as soon as she heard his voice: nor was I displeased by such an exhibition of impatience, considering that he spoke merely for the purpose of snubbing me. His powers were placed in evidence by her not daring to utter a sarcasm, which was possibly the main cause of her burning fretfulness.

I believe there was not a word uttered by me throughout the dinner that escaped him. Nevertheless, he did his business of catching and worrying my poor unwary sentences too neatly for me, an admirer of real force and aptitude, to feel vindictive. I behaved to him like a gentleman, as we phrase it, and obtained once an encouraging nod from the margravine. She leaned to me to say, that they were accustomed to think themselves lucky if no learned talk came on between the Professor and his pupil. The truth was, that his residence in Sarkeld was an honour to the prince, and his acceptance of the tutorship a signal condescension, accounted for by his appreciation of the princess’s intelligence. He was a man distinguished even in Germany for scholarship, rather notorious for his political and social opinions too. The margravine, with infinite humour in her countenance, informed me that he wished to fit the princess for the dignity of a Doctor of Laws.

’It says much for her that he has not spoilt her manners; her health, you know, he succeeded in almost totally destroying, and he is at it again. The man is, I suspect, at heart arrant Republican. He may teach a girl whatever nonsensical politics he likes--it goes at the lifting of the bridegroom’s little finger. We could not permit him to be near a young

prince. Alas! we have none.'

The Professor allowed himself extraordinary liberties with strangers, the guests of the margravine. I met him crossing an inner court next day. He interrupted me in the middle of a commonplace remark, and to this effect:

'You are either a most fortunate or a most unfortunate young man!'

So profoundly penetrated with thoughtfulness was the tone of his voice that I could not take umbrage. The attempt to analyze his signification cost me an aching forehead, perhaps because I knew it too acutely.

CHAPTER XXVIII

OTTILIA

She was on horseback; I on foot, Schwartz for sole witness, and a wide space of rolling silent white country around us.

We had met in the fall of the winter noon by accident. 'You like my Professor?' said Ottilia.

'I do: I respect him for his learning.'

'You forgive him his irony? It is not meant to be personal to you. England is the object; and partly, I may tell you, it springs from jealousy. You have such wealth! You embrace half the world: you are such a little island! All this is wonderful. The bitterness is, you are such a mindless people--I do but quote to explain my Professor's ideas. "Mindless," he says, "and arrogant, and neither in the material nor in the spiritual kingdom of noble or gracious stature, and ceasing to have a brave aspect." He calls you squat Goths. Can you bear to hear me?'

'Princess!'

'And to his conception, you, who were pioneers when the earth had to be shaped for implements and dug for gold, will turn upon us and stop our march; you are to be overthrown and left behind, there to gain humility from the only teacher you can understand--from poverty. Will you defend yourself?'

'Well, no, frankly, I will not. The proper defence for a nation is its history.'

'For an individual?'

'For a man, his readiness to abide by his word.'

'For a woman--what?'

’For a princess, her ancestry.’

’Ah! but I spoke of women. There, there is my ground of love for my Professor! I meet my equals, princes, princesses, and the man, the woman, is out of them, gone, flown! They are out of the tide of humanity; they are walking titles, "Now," says my Professor, "that tide is the blood of our being; the blood is the life-giver; and to be cut off from it is to perish." Our princely houses he esteems as dead wood. Not near so much say I: yet I hear my equals talk, and I think, "Oh! my Professor, they testify to your wisdom." I love him because he has given my every sense a face-forward attitude (you will complain of my feebleness of speech) to exterior existence. There is a princely view of life which is a true one; but it is a false one if it is the sole one.
In your Parliament your House of Commons shows us real princes, your Throne merely titled ones. I speak what everybody knows, and you, I am sure, are astonished to hear me.’

’I am,’ said I.

’It is owing to my Professor, my mind’s father and mother. They say it is the pleasure of low-born people to feel themselves princes; mine it is to share their natural feelings. "For a princess, her ancestry." Yes; but for a princess who is no more than princess, her ancestors are a bundle of faggots, and she, with her mind and heart tied fast to them, is, at least a good half of her, dead wood. This is our opinion. May I guess at your thoughts?’

’It’s more than I could dare to do myself, princess.’

How different from the Ottilia I had known, or could have imagined! That was one thought.

’Out of the number, then, this,’ she resumed: ’you think that your English young ladies have command over their tongues: is it not so?’

’There are prattlers among them.’

’Are they educated strictly?’

’I know little of them. They seem to me to be educated to conceal their education.’

’They reject ideas?’

’It is uncertain whether they have had the offer.’

Ottilia smiled. ’Would it be a home in their midst?’

Something moved my soul to lift wings, but the passion sank.

’I questioned you of English ladies,’ she resumed, ’because we read your writings of us. Your kindness to us is that which passes from nurse to

infant; your criticism reminds one of paedagogue and urchin. You make us sorry for our manners and habits, if they are so bad; but most of all you are merry at our simplicity. Not only we say what we feel, we display it. Now, I am so German, this offence is especially mine.'

I touched her horse's neck, and said, 'I have not seen it.'

'Yet you understand me. You know me well. How is that?'

The murmur of honest confession came from me: 'I have seen it!'

She laughed. 'I bring you to be German, you see. Could you forsake your England?'

'Instantly, though not willingly.'

'Not regrettingly?'

'Cheerfully, if I had my work and my--my friend.'

'No; but well I know a man's field of labour is his country. You have your ambition.'

'Yes, now I have.'

She struck a fir-branch with her riding-whip, scattering flakes on my head. 'Would that extinguish it?'

'In the form of an avalanche perhaps it would.'

'Then you make your aims a part of your life?'

'I do.'

'Then you win! or it is written of you that you never knew failure! So with me. I set my life upon my aim when I feel that the object is of true worth. I win, or death hides from me my missing it.

This I look to; this obtains my Professor's nod, and the approval of my conscience. Worthiness, however!--the mind must be trained to discern it. We can err very easily in youth; and to find ourselves shooting at a false mark uncontrollably must be a cruel thing. I cannot say it is undeserving the scourge of derision. Do you know yourself? I do not; and I am told by my Professor that it is the sole subject to which you should not give a close attention. I can believe him. For who beguiles so much as Self? Tell her to play, she plays her sweetest. Lurk to surprise her, and what a serpent she becomes! She is not to be aware that you are watching her. You have to review her acts, observe her methods. Always be above her; then by-and-by you catch her hesitating at cross-roads; then she is bare: you catch her bewailing or exulting; then she can no longer pretend she is other than she seems. I make self the feminine, for she is the weaker, and the soul has to purify and raise her. On that point my Professor and I disagree. Dr. Julius, unlike our

modern Germans, esteems women over men, or it is a further stroke of his irony. He does not think your English ladies have heads: of us he is proud as a laurelled poet. Have I talked you dumb?'

'Princess, you have given me matter to think upon.'

She shook her head, smiling with closed eyelids.

I, now that speech had been summoned to my lips, could not restrain it, and proceeded, scarcely governing the words, quite without ideas; 'For you to be indifferent to rank--yes, you may well be; you have intellect; you are high above me in both--' So on, against good taste and common sense.

She cried: 'Oh! no compliments from you to me. I will receive them, if you please, by deputy. Let my Professor hear your immense admiration for his pupil's accomplishments. Hear him then in return! He will beat at me like the rainy West wind on a lily. "See," he will say, when I am broken and bespattered, "she is fair, she is stately, is she not!" And really I feel, at the sound of praise, though I like it, that the opposite, satire, condemnation, has its good right to pelt me. Look; there is the tower, there 's the statue, and under that line of pine-trees the path we ran up;--"dear English boys!" as I remember saying to myself; and what did you say of me?'

Her hand was hanging loose. I grasped it. She drew a sudden long breath, and murmured, without fretting to disengage herself,

'My friend, not that!'

Her voice carried an unmistakeable command. I kissed above the fingers and released them.

'Are you still able to run?' said she, leading with an easy canter, face averted. She put on fresh speed; I was outstripped.

Had she quitted me in anger? Had she parted from me out of view of the villa windows to make it possible for us to meet accidentally again in the shadow of her old protecting Warhead, as we named him from his appearance, gaunt Schwartz?

CHAPTER XXIX

AN EVENING WITH DR. JULIUS VON KARSTEG

In my perplexity, I thought of the Professor's saying: 'A most fortunate or a most unfortunate young man.' These words began to strike me as having a prophetic depth that I had not fathomed. I felt myself fast becoming bound in every limb, every branch of my soul. Ottilia met me smiling. She moved free as air. She could pursue her studies, and argue

and discuss and quote, keep unclouded eyes, and laugh and play, and be her whole living self, unfettered, as if the pressure of my hand implied nothing. Perhaps for that reason I had her pardon. 'My friend, not that!' Her imperishably delicious English rang me awake, and lulled me asleep. Was it not too securely friendly? Or was it not her natural voice to the best beloved, bidding him respect her, that we might meet with the sanction of her trained discretion? The Professor would invite me to his room after the 'sleep well' of the ladies, and I sat with him much like his pipe-bowl, which burned bright a moment at one sturdy puff, but generally gave out smoke in fantastical wreaths. He told me frankly he had a poor idea of my erudition. My fancifulness he commended as something to be turned to use in writing stories. 'Give me time, and I'll do better things,' I groaned. He rarely spoke of the princess; with grave affection always when he did. He was evidently observing me comprehensively. The result was beyond my guessing.

One night he asked me what my scheme of life was.

On the point of improvizing one of an impressive character, I stopped and confessed: 'I have so many that I may say I have none.' Expecting reproof, I begged him not to think the worse of me for that.

'Quite otherwise,' said he. 'I have never cared to read deliberately in the book you open to me, my good young man.'

'The book, Herr Professor?'

'Collect your wits. We will call it Shakespeare's book; or Gothe's, in the minor issues. No, not minor, but a narrower volume. You were about to give me the answer of a hypocrite. Was it not so?'

I admitted it, feeling that it was easily to have been perceived. He was elated.

'Good. Then I apprehend that you wait for the shifting of a tide to carry you on?'

'I try to strengthen my mind.'

'So I hear,' said he dryly.

'Well, as far as your schools of teaching will allow.'

'That is, you read and commit to memory, like other young scholars. Whereunto? Have you no aim? You have, or I am told you are to have, fabulous wealth--a dragon's heap. You are one of the main drainpipes of English gold. What is your object? To spend it?'

'I shall hope to do good with it.'

'To do good! There is hardly a prince or millionaire, in history or alive, who has not in his young days hugged that notion. Pleasure swarms, he has the pick of his market. You English live for pleasure.'

’We are the hardest workers in the world.’

’That you may live for pleasure! Deny it!’

He puffed his tobacco-smoke zealously, and resumed:

’Yes, you work hard for money. You eat and drink, and boast of your exercises: they sharpen your appetites. So goes the round. We strive, we fail; you are our frog-chorus of critics, and you suppose that your brekek-koax affects us. I say we strive and fail, but we strive on, while you remain in a past age, and are proud of it. You reproach us with lack of common sense, as if the belly were its seat. Now I ask you whether you have a scheme of life, that I may know whether you are to be another of those huge human pumpkins called rich men, who cover your country and drain its blood and intellect--those impoverishers of nature! Here we have our princes; but they are rulers, they are responsible, they have their tasks, and if they also run to gourds, the scandal punishes them and their order, all in seasonable time. They stand eminent. Do you mark me? They are not a community, and are not--bad enough! bad enough!--but they are not protected by laws in their right to do nothing for what they receive. That system is an invention of the commercial genius and the English.’

’We have our aristocracy, Herr Professor.’

’Your nobles are nothing but rich men inflated with empty traditions of insufferable, because unwarrantable, pride, and drawing, substance from alliances with the merchant class. Are they your leaders? Do they lead you in Letters? in the Arts? ay, or in Government? No, not, I am informed, not even in military service! and there our titled witlings do manage to hold up their brainless pates. You are all in one mass, struggling in the stream to get out and lie and wallow and belch on the banks. You work so hard that you have all but one aim, and that is fatness and ease!’

’Pardon me, Herr Professor,’ I interposed, ’I see your drift. Still I think we are the only people on earth who have shown mankind a representation of freedom. And as to our aristocracy, I must, with due deference to you, maintain that it is widely respected.’

I could not conceive why he went on worrying me in this manner with his jealous outburst of Continental bile.

’Widely!’ he repeated. ’It is widely respected; and you respect it: and why do you respect it?’

’We have illustrious names in our aristocracy.’

’We beat you in illustrious names and in the age of the lines, my good young man.’

’But not in a race of nobles who have stood for the country’s liberties.’

'So long as it imperilled their own! Any longer?'

'Well, they have known how to yield. They have helped to build our Constitution.'

'Reverence their ancestors, then! The worse for such descendants. But you have touched the exact stamp of the English mind:--it is, to accept whatsoever is bequeathed it, without inquiry whether there is any change in the matter. Nobles in very fact you would not let them be if they could. Nobles in name, with a remote recommendation to posterity--that suits you!'

He sat himself up to stuff a fresh bowl of tobacco, while he pursued: 'Yes, yes: you worship your aristocracy. It is notorious. You have a sort of sagacity. I am not prepared to contest the statement that you have a political instinct. Here it is chiefly social. You worship your so-called aristocracy perforce in order to preserve an ideal of contrast to the vulgarity of the nation.'

This was downright insolence.

It was intolerable. I jumped on my feet. 'The weapons I would use in reply to such remarks I cannot address to you, Herr Professor. Therefore, excuse me.'

He sent out quick spirts of smoke rolling into big volumes. 'Nay, my good young Englishman, but on the other hand you have not answered me. And hear me: yes, you have shown us a representation of freedom. True. But you are content with it in a world that moves by computation some considerable sum upwards of sixty thousand miles an hour.'

'Not on a fresh journey--a recurring course!' said I.

'Good!' he applauded, and I was flattered.

'I grant you the physical illustration,' the Professor continued, and with a warm gaze on me, I thought. 'The mind journeys somewhat in that way, and we in our old Germany hold that the mind advances notwithstanding. Astronomers condescending to earthly philosophy may admit that advance in the physical universe is computable, though not perceptible. Some--whither we tend, shell and spirit. You English, fighting your little battles of domestic policy, and sneering at us for flying at higher game, you unimpressionable English, who won't believe in the existence of aims that don't drop on the ground before your eyes, and squat and stare at you, you assert that man's labour is completed when the poor are kept from crying out. Now my question is, have you a scheme of life consonant with the spirit of modern philosophy--with the views of intelligent, moral, humane human beings of this period? Or are you one of your robust English brotherhood worthy of a Caligula in his prime, lions in gymnastics--for a time; sheep always in the dominions of mind; and all of one pattern, all in a rut! Favour me with an outline of your ideas. Pour them out pell-mell, intelligibly or not, no matter. I

undertake to catch you somewhere. I mean to know you, hark you, rather with your assistance than without it.'

We were deep in the night. I had not a single idea ready for delivery. I could have told him, that wishing was a good thing, excess of tobacco a bad, moderation in speech one of the outward evidences of wisdom; but Ottilia's master in the Humanities exacted civility from me.

'Indeed,' I said, 'I have few thoughts to communicate at present, Herr Professor. My German will fail me as soon as I quit common ground. I love my country, and I do not reckon it as perfect. We are swillers, possibly gluttons; we have a large prosperous middle class; many good men are to be found in it.'

His discharges of smoke grew stifling. My advocacy was certainly of a miserable sort.

'Yes, Herr Professor, on my way when a boy to this very place I met a thorough good man.'

Here I related the tale of my encounter with Captain Welsh.

Dr. Julius nodded rapidly for continuations. Further! further!

He refused to dig at the mine within me, and seemed to expect it to unbosom its riches by explosion.

'Well, Herr Professor, we have conquered India, and hold it as no other people could.'

'Vide the articles in the last file of English newspapers !' said he.

'Suppose we boast of it '

'Can you?' he simulated wonderment.

'Why, surely it's something!'

'Something for non-commissioned officers to boast of; not for statesmen. However, say that you are fit to govern Asiatics. Go on.'

'I would endeavour to equalize ranks at home, encourage the growth of ideas . . .'

'Supporting a non-celibate clergy, and an intermingled aristocracy? Your endeavours, my good young man, will lessen like those of the man who employed a spade to uproot a rock. It wants blasting. Your married clergy and merchandized aristocracy are coils: they are the ivy about your social tree: you would resemble Laocoon in the throes, if one could imagine you anything of a heroic figure. Forward.'

In desperation I exclaimed, 'It 's useless! I have not thought at all. I have been barely educated. I only know that I do desire with all my

heart to know more, to be of some service.'

'Now we are at the bottom, then!' said he.

But I cried, 'Stay; let me beg you to tell me what you meant by calling me a most fortunate, or a most unfortunate young man.'

He chuckled over his pipe-stem, 'Aha!'

'How am I one or the other?'

'By the weight of what you carry in your head.'

'How by the weight?'

He shot a keen look at me. 'The case, I suspect, is singular, and does not often happen to a youth. You are fortunate if you have a solid and adventurous mind: most unfortunate if you are a mere sensational whipster. There 's an explanation that covers the whole. I am as much in the dark as you are. I do not say which of us two has the convex eye.'

Protesting that I was unable to read riddles, though the heat of the one in hand made my frame glow, I entreated to have explicit words. He might be in Ottilia's confidence, probing me--why not? Any question he chose to put to me, I said, I was ready to answer.

'But it's the questioner who unmasks,' said he.

'Are we masked, Herr Professor? I was not aware of it.'

'Look within, and avoid lying.'

He stood up. 'My nights,' he remarked, 'are not commonly wasted in this manner. We Germans use the night for work.'

After a struggle to fling myself on his mercy and win his aid or counsel, I took his hand respectfully, and holding it, said, 'I am unable to speak out. I would if it involved myself alone.'

'Yes, yes, I comprehend; your country breeds honourable men, chivalrous youngsters,' he replied. 'It 's not enough--not enough. I want to see a mental force, energy of brain. If you had that, you might look as high as you liked for the match for it, with my consent. Do you hear? What I won't have is, flat robbery! Mark me, Germany or England, it 's one to me if I see vital powers in the field running to a grand career. It 's a fine field over there. As well there as here, then! But better here than there if it 's to be a wasp's life. Do you understand me?'

I replied, 'I think I do, if I may dare to'; and catching breath: 'Herr Professor, dear friend, forgive my boldness; grant me time to try me; don't judge of me at once; take me for your pupil--am I presumptuous in asking it?--make of me what you will, what you can; examine me; you may

find there's more in me than I or anybody may know. I have thoughts and aims, feeble at present--Good God! I see nothing for me but a choice of the two--"most unfortunate" seems likeliest. You read at a glance that I had no other choice. Rather the extremes!--I would rather grasp the limits of life and be swung to the pits below, be the most unfortunate of human beings, than never to have aimed at a star. You laugh at me? An Englishman must be horribly in earnest to talk as I do now. But it is a star!' (The image of Ottilia sprang fountain-like into blue night heavens before my eyes memorably.) 'She,' was my next word. I swallowed it, and with a burning face, petitioned for help in my studies.

To such sight as I had at that instant he appeared laughing outrageously. It was a composed smile 'Right,' he said; 'you shall have help in a settled course. Certain Professors, friends of mine, at your University, will see you through it. Aim your head at a star--your head!--and even if you miss it you don't fall. It's that light dancer, that gambler, the heart in you, my good young man, which aims itself at inaccessible heights, and has the fall--somewhat icy to reflect on! Give that organ full play and you may make sure of a handful of dust. Do you hear? It's a mind that wins a mind. That is why I warn you of being most unfortunate if you are a sensational whipster. Good-night Shut my door fast that I may not have the trouble to rise.'

I left him with the warm lamplight falling on his forehead, and books piled and sloped, shut and open; an enviable picture to one in my condition. The peacefulness it indicated made scholarship seem beautiful, attainable, I hoped. I had the sense to tell myself that it would give me unrotting grain, though it should fail of being a practicable road to my bright star; and when I spurned at consolations for failure, I could still delight to think that she shone over these harvests and the reapers.

CHAPTER XXX

A SUMMER STORM, AND LOVE

The foregoing conversations with Ottilia and her teacher, hard as they were for passion to digest, grew luminous on a relapsing heart. Without apprehending either their exact purport or the characters of the speakers, I was transformed by them from a state of craving to one of intense quietude. I thought neither of winning her, nor of aiming to win her, but of a foothold on the heights she gazed at reverently. And if, sometimes, seeing and hearing her, I thought, Oh, rarest soul! the wish was, that brother and sisterhood of spirit might be ours. My other eager thirstful self I shook off like a thing worn out. Men in my confidence would have supposed me more rational: I was simply possessed.

My desire was to go into harness, buried in books, and for recreation to chase visions of original ideas for benefiting mankind. A clear-wined friend at my elbow, my dear Temple, perhaps, could have hit on the track

of all this mental vagueness, but it is doubtful that he would have pushed me out of the strange mood, half stupor, half the folding-in of passion; it was such magical happiness. Not to be awake, yet vividly sensible; to lie calm and reflect, and only to reflect; be satisfied with each succeeding hour and the privations of the hour, and, as if in the depths of a smooth water, to gather fold over patient fold of the submerged self, safe from wounds; the happiness was not noble, but it breathed and was harmless, and it gave me rest when the alternative was folly and bitterness.

Visitors were coming to the palace to meet the prince, on his return with my father from England. I went back to the University, jealous of the invasion of my ecstatic calm by new faces, and jealous when there of the privileges those new faces would enjoy; and then, how my recent deadness of life cried out against me as worse than a spendthrift, a destroyer! a nerveless absorbent of the bliss showered on me--the light of her morning presence when, just before embracing, she made her obeisance to the margravine, and kindly saluted me, and stooped her forehead for the baroness to kiss it; her gestures and her voice; her figure on horseback, with old Warhead following, and I meeting her but once!--her walk with the Professor, listening to his instructions; I used to see them walking up and down the cypress path of the villa garden, her ear given to him wholly as she continued her grave step, and he shuffling and treading out of his line across hers, or on the path-borders, and never apologizing, nor she noticing it. At night she sang, sometimes mountain ditties to the accompaniment of the zither, leaning on the table and sweeping the wires between snatches of talk. Nothing haunted me so much as those tones of, her zither, which were little louder than summer gnats when fireflies are at their brightest and storm impends.

My father brought horses from England, and a couple of English grooms, and so busy an air of cheerfulness, that I had, like a sick invalid, to beg him to keep away from me and prolong unlimitedly his visit to Sarkeld; the rather so, as he said he had now become indispensable to the prince besides the margravine. 'Only no more bronze statues!' I adjured him. He nodded. He had hired Count Fretzel's chateau, in the immediate neighbourhood, and was absolutely independent, he said. His lawyers were busy procuring evidence. He had impressed Prince Ernest with a due appreciation of the wealth of a young English gentleman, by taking him over my grandfather's mine.

'And, Richie, we have advanced him a trifle of thousands for the working of this coal discovery of his. In six weeks our schooner yacht will be in the Elbe to offer him entertainment. He graciously deigns to accept a couple of English hunters at our hands; we shall improve his breed of horses, I suspect. Now, Richie, have I done well? I flatter myself I have been attentive to your interests, have I not?'

He hung waiting for confidential communications on my part, but did not press for them; he preserved an unvarying delicacy in that respect.

'You have nothing to tell?' he asked.

'Nothing,' I said. 'I have only to thank you.'

He left me. At no other period of our lives were we so disunited. I felt in myself the reverse of everything I perceived in him, and such letters as I wrote to the squire consequently had a homelier tone. It seems that I wrote of the pleasures of simple living--of living for learning's sake. Mr. Peterborough at the same time despatched praises of my sobriety of behaviour and diligent studiousness, confessing that I began to outstrip him in some of the higher branches. The squire's brief reply breathed satisfaction, but too evidently on the point where he had been led to misconceive the state of affairs. 'He wanted to have me near him, as did another person, whom I appeared to be forgetting; he granted me another year's leave of absence, bidding me bluffly not to be a bookworm and forget I was an Englishman.' The idea that I was deceiving him never entered my mind.

I was deceiving everybody, myself in the bargain, as a man must do when in chase of a woman above him in rank. The chase necessitates deceit--who knows? chicanery of a sort as well; it brings inevitable humiliations; such that ever since the commencement of it at speed I could barely think of my father with comfort, and rarely met him with pleasure. With what manner of face could I go before the prince or the margravine, and say, I am an English commoner, the son of a man of doubtful birth, and I claim the hand of the princess? What contortions were not in store for these features of mine! Even as affairs stood now, could I make a confidant of Temple and let him see me through the stages of the adventure? My jingling of verses, my fretting about the signification of flowers, and trifling with symbols, haunted me excrutiatingly, taunting me with I know not what abject vileness of spirit.

In the midst of these tortures an arrow struck me, in the shape of an anonymous letter, containing one brief line: 'The princess is in need of help.'

I threw my books aside, and repaired to Count Fretzel's chateau, from which, happily, my father was absent; but the countenance of the princess gave me no encouragement to dream I could be of help to her; yet a second unsigned note worded in a quaint blunt manner, insisted that it was to me she looked. I chanced to hear the margravine, addressing Baroness Turckems, say: 'The princess's betrothal,' what further, escaped me. Soon after, I heard that Prince Otto was a visitor at the lake-palace. My unknown correspondent plied me a third time.

I pasted the scrap in my neglected book of notes and reflections, where it had ample space and about equal lucidity. It drew me to the book, nearly driving me desperate; I was now credulous of anything, except that the princess cared for help from me. I resolved to go home; I had no longer any zeal for study. The desolation of the picture of England in my mind grew congenial. It became imperative that I should go somewhere, for news arrived of my father's approach with a French company of actors, and deafening entertainments were at hand. On the whole, I thought it decent to finish my course at the University, if I had not quite lost the

power of getting into the heart of books. One who studies is not being a fool: that is an established truth. I thanked Dr. Julius for planting it among my recollections. The bone and marrow of study form the surest antidote to the madness of that light gambler, the heart, and distasteful as books were, I had gained the habit of sitting down to them, which was as good as an instinct toward the right medicine, if it would but work.

On an afternoon of great heat I rode out for a gaze at the lake-palace, that I chose to fancy might be the last, foreseeing the possibility of one of my fits of movement coming on me before sunset. My very pulses throbbed 'away!' Transferring the sense of overwhelming heat to my moral condition, I thought it the despair of silliness to stay baking in that stagnant place, where the sky did nothing but shine, gave nothing forth. The sky was bronze, a vast furnace dome. The folds of light and shadow everywhere were satin-rich; shadows perforce of blackness had light in them, and the light a sword-like sharpness over their edges. It was inanimate radiance. The laurels sparkled as with frost-points; the denser foliage dropped burning brown: a sickly saint's-ring was round the heads of the pines. That afternoon the bee hummed of thunder, and refreshed the ear.

I pitied the horse I rode, and the dog at his heels, but for me the intensity was inspiriting. Nothing lay in the light, I had the land to myself. 'What hurts me?' I thought. My physical pride was up, and I looked on the cattle in black corners of the fields, and here and there a man tumbled anyhow, a wreck of limbs, out of the insupportable glare, with an even glance. Not an eye was lifted on me.

I saw nothing that moved until a boat shot out of the bight of sultry lake-water, lying close below the dark promontory where I had drawn rein. The rower was old Schwartz Warhead. How my gorge rose at the impartial brute! He was rowing the princess and a young man in uniform across the lake.

That they should cross from unsheltered paths to close covert was reasonable conduct at a time when the vertical rays of the sun were fiery arrow-heads. As soon as they were swallowed in the gloom I sprang in my saddle with torture, transfixed by one of the coarsest shafts of hideous jealousy. Off I flew, tearing through dry underwood, and round the bend of the lake, determined to confront her, wave the man aside, and have my last word with the false woman. Of the real Ottilia I had lost conception. Blood was inflamed, brain bare of vision: 'He takes her hand, she jumps from the boat; he keeps her hand, she feigns to withdraw it, all woman to him in her eyes: they pass out of sight.' A groan burst from me. I strained my crazy imagination to catch a view of them under cover of the wood and torture myself trebly, but it was now blank, shut fast. Sitting bolt upright, panting on horseback in the yellow green of one of the open woodways, I saw the young officer raise a branch of chestnut and come out. He walked moodily up to within a yard of my horse, looked up at me, and with an angry stare that grew to be one of astonishment, said, 'Ah? I think I have had the pleasure--somewhere? in Wurtemberg, if I recollect.'

It was Prince Otto. I dismounted. He stood alone. The spontaneous question on my lips would have been 'Where is she?' but I was unable to speak a word.

'English?' he said, patting the horse's neck.

'Yes--the horse? an English hunter. How are you, Prince Otto? Do you like the look of him?'

'Immensely. You know we have a passion for English thoroughbreds. Pardon me, you look as if you had been close on a sunstroke. Do you generally take rides in this weather?'

'I was out by chance. If you like him, pray take him; take him. Mount him and try him. He is yours if you care to have him; if he doesn't suit you send him up to Count Fretzel's. I've had riding enough in the light.'

'Perhaps you have,' said he, and hesitated. 'It's difficult to resist the offer of such a horse. If you want to dispose of him, mention it when we meet again. Shall I try him? I have a slight inclination to go as hard as you have been going, but he shall have good grooming in the prince's stables, and that 's less than half as near again as Count Pretzel's place; and a horse like this ought not to be out in this weather, if you will permit me the remark.'

'No: I'm ashamed of bringing him out, and shan't look on him with satisfaction,' said I. 'Take him and try him, and then take him from me, if you don't mind.'

'Do you know, I would advise your lying down in the shade awhile?' he observed solicitously. 'I have seen men on the march in Hungary and Italy. An hour's rest under cover would have saved them.'

I thanked him.

'Ice is the thing!' he ejaculated. 'I 'll ride and have some fetched to you. Rest here.'

With visible pleasure he swung to the saddle. I saw him fix his cavalry thighs and bound off as if he meant to take a gate. Had he glanced behind him he would have fancied that the sun had done its worst. I ran at full speed down the footpath, mad to think she might have returned homeward by the lake. The two had parted--why? He this way, she that. They would not have parted but for a division of the will. I came on the empty boat. Schwartz lay near it beneath heavy boughs, smoking and perspiring in peace. Neither of us spoke. And it was now tempered by a fit of alarm that I renewed my search. So when I beheld her, intense gratitude broke my passion; when I touched her hand it was trembling for absolute assurance of her safety. She was leaning against a tree, gazing on the ground, a white figure in that iron-moted gloom.

'Otto!' she cried, shrinking from the touch; but at sight of me, all

softly as a light in the heavens, her face melted in a suffusion of wavering smiles, and deep colour shot over them, heavenly to see. She pressed her bosom while I spoke: a lover's speech, breathless.

'You love me?' she said.

'You have known it!'

'Yes, yes!'

'Forgiven me? Speak, princess.'

'Call me by my name.'

'My own soul! Ottilia!'

She disengaged her arms tenderly.

'I have known it by my knowledge of myself,' she said, breathing with her lips dissevered. 'My weakness has come upon me. Yes, I love you. It is spoken. It is too true. Is it a fate that brings us together when I have just lost my little remaining strength--all power? You hear me! I pretend to wisdom, and talk of fate!'

She tried to laugh in scorn of herself, and looked at me with almost a bitter smile on her features, made beautiful by her soft eyes. I feared from the helpless hanging of her underlip that she would swoon; a shudder convulsed her; and at the same time I became aware of the blotting out of sunlight, and a strange bowing and shore-like noising of the forest.

'Do not heed me,' she said in happy undertones. 'I think I am going to cry like a girl. One cannot see one's pride die like this, without but it is not anguish of any kind. Since we are here together, I would have no other change.'

She spoke till the tears came thick.

I told her of the letters I had received, warning me of a trouble besetting her. They were, perhaps, the excuse for my conduct, if I had any.

Schwartz burst on us with his drill-sergeant's shout for the princess. Standing grey in big rain-drops he was an object of curiosity to us both. He came to take her orders.

'The thunder,' he announced, raising a telegraphic arm, 'rolls. It rains. We have a storm. Command me, princess! your highness!'

Ottilia's eyelids were set blinking by one look aloft. Rain and lightning filled heaven and earth.

'Direct us, you!' she said to me gently.

The natural proposal was to despatch her giant by the direct way down the lake to fetch a carriage from the stables, or matting from the boathouse. I mentioned it, but did not press it.

She meditated an instant. 'I believe I may stay with my beloved?'

Schwartz and I ran to the boat, hauled it on land, and set it keel upward against a low leafy dripping branch. To this place of shelter, protecting her as securely as I could, I led the princess, while Schwartz happed a rough trench around it with one of the sculls. We started him on foot to do the best thing possible; for the storm gave no promise that it was a passing one. In truth, I knew that I should have been the emissary and he the guard; but the storm overhead was not fuller of its mighty burden than I of mine. I looked on her as mine for the hour, and well won.

CHAPTER XXXI

PRINCESS OTTILIA'S LETTER

That hour of tempest went swift as one of its flashes over our little nest of peace, where we crouched like insects. The lightning and the deluge seemed gloriously endless. Ottilia's harbouring nook was dry within an inch of rushing floods and pattered mire. On me the torrents descended, and her gentle efforts drew me to her side, as with a maternal claim to protect me, or to perish in my arms if the lightning found us. We had for prospect an ever-outbursting flame of foliage, and the hubbub of the hissing lake, crimson, purple, dusky grey, like the face of a passionate creature scourged. It was useless to speak. Her lips were shut, but I had the intent kindness of her eyes on me almost unceasingly.

The good hour slipped away. Old Warhead's splashed knees on the level of our heads were seen by us when the thunder had abated. Ottilia prepared to rise.

'You shall hear from me,' she said, bending with brows measuring the boat-roof, like a bird about to fly.

'Shall I see you?'

'Ultimately you surely will. Ah! still be patient.'

'Am I not? have I not been?'

'Yes; and can you regret it?'

'No; but we separate!'

'Would you have us be two feet high for ever?' she answered smiling.

’One foot high, or under earth, if it might be together!’

’Poor little gnomes!’ said she.

The homeliness of our resting-place arrested her for an instant, and perhaps a touch of comic pity for things of such diminutive size as to see nothing but knees where a man stood. Our heads were hidden.

’Adieu! no pledge is needed,’ she said tenderly.

’None!’ I replied.

She returned to the upper world with a burning blush.

Schwartz had borne himself with extraordinary discretion by forbearing to spread alarm at the palace. He saluted his young mistress in the regulation manner while receiving her beneath a vast umbrella, the holiday peasant’s invariable companion in these parts. A forester was in attendance carrying shawls, clogs, and matting. The boat was turned and launched.

’Adieu, Harry Richmond. Will you be quite patient till you hear from me?’ said Ottilia, and added, ’It is my question!’ delightfully recalling old times.

I was soon gazing at the track of the boat in rough water.

Shouts were being raised somewhere about the forest, and were replied to by hearty bellow of the rower’s lungs. She was now at liberty to join my name to her own or not, as she willed. I had to wait. But how much richer was I than all the world! The future owed me nothing. I would have registered a vow to ask nothing of it. Among the many determined purposes framing which I walked home, was one to obtain a grant of that bit of land where we had sat together, and build a temple on it. The fear that it might be trodden by feet of men before I had enclosed it beset me with anguish. The most absolute pain I suffered sprang from a bewildering incapacity to conjure up a vision of Ottilia free of the glittering accessories of her high birth; and that was the pain of shame; but it came only at intervals, when pride stood too loftily and the shadow of possible mischance threatened it with the axe.

She did not condemn me to long waiting. Her favourite Aennchen brought me her first letter. The girl’s face beamed, and had a look as if she commended me for a worthy deed.

’An answer, Aennchen?’ I asked her.

’Yes, yes!’ said she anxiously; ’but it will take more time than I can spare.’ She appointed a meeting near the palace garden-gates at night.

I chose a roof of limes to read under.

’Noblest and best beloved!’ the princess addressed me in her own tongue,

doubting, I perceived, as her training had taught her, that my English eyes would tolerate apostrophes of open-hearted affection. The rest was her English confided to a critic who would have good reason to be merciful:

'The night has come that writes the chapter of the day. My father has had his interview with his head-forester to learn what has befallen from the storm in the forest. All has not been told him! That shall not be delayed beyond to-morrow.

'I am hurried to it. And I had the thought that it hung perhaps at the very end of my life among the coloured leaves, the strokes of sunset--that then it would be known! or if earlier, distant from this strange imperative Now. But we have our personal freedom now, and I have learnt from minutes what I did mean to seek from years, and from our forest what I hoped that change of scene, travel, experience, would teach me. Yet I was right in my intention. It was a discreet and a just meaning I had. For things will not go smoothly for him at once: he will have his hard battle. He is proved: he has passed his most brave ordeal. But I! Shall I see him put to it and not certainly know myself? Even thus I reasoned. One cannot study without knowing that our human nature is most frail. Daily the body changes, daily the mind--why not the heart? I did design to travel and converse with various persons.

'Pardon it to one who knew that she would require super-feminine power of decision to resolve that she would dispose of herself!

'I heard of Harry Richmond before I saw him. My curiosity to behold the two fair boys of the sailor kingdom set me whipping my pony after them that day so remote, which is always yesterday. My thoughts followed you, and I wondered--does he mean to be a distinguished countryman of his Nelson? or a man of learning? Then many an argument with "my Professor," until--for so it will ever be--the weaker creature did succumb in the open controversy, and thought her thoughts to herself. Contempt of England gained on me still. But when I lay withered, though so young, by the sea-shore, his country's ancient grandeur insisted, and I dreamed of Harry Richmond, imagining that I had been false to my childhood. You stood before me, dearest. You were kind: you were strong, and had a gentle voice. Our souls were caught together on the sea. Do you recollect my slip in the speaking of Lucy Sibley's marriage?--"We change countries." At that moment I smelt salt air, which would bring you to my sight and touch were you and I divided let me not think how far.

'To-morrow I tell the prince, my father, that I am a plighted woman. Then for us the struggle, for him the grief. I have to look on him and deal it.

'I can refer him to Dr. Julius for my estimate of my husband's worth.

'"My Professor" was won by it. He once did incline to be the young bold Englishman's enemy. "Why is he here? what seeks he among us?" It was his jealousy, not of the man, but of the nation, which would send one to

break and bear away his carefully cultivated German lily. No eye but his did read me through. And you endured the trial that was forced on you. You made no claim for recompense when it was over. No, there is no pure love but strong love! It belongs to our original elements, and of its purity should never be question, only of its strength.

'I could not help you when you were put under scrutiny before the margravine and the baroness. Help from me would have been the betrayal of both. The world has accurate eyes, if they are not very penetrating. The world will see a want of balance immediately, and also too true a balance, but it will not detect a depth of concord between two souls that do not show some fretfulness on the surface.

'So it was considered that in refusing my cousin Otto and other proposed alliances, I was heart-free. An instructed princess, they thought, was of the woeful species of woman. You left us: I lost you. I heard you praised for civil indifference to me--the one great quality you do not possess! Then it was the fancy of people that I, being very cold, might be suffered to hear my cousin plead for himself. The majority of our family favour Otto. He was permitted to woo me as though I had been a simple maid; and henceforth shall I have pity for all poor little feminine things who are so persecuted, asked to inflict cruelty--to take a sword and strike with it. But I--who look on marriage as more than a surrender--I could well withstand surpassing eloquence. It was easy to me to be inflexible in speech and will when I stood there, entreated to change myself. But when came magically the other, who is my heart, my voice, my mate, the half of me, and broke into illumination of things long hidden--oh! then did I say to you that it was my weakness had come upon me? It was my last outcry of self--the "I" expiring. I am now yours, "We" has long overshadowed "I," and now engulphs it. We are one. If it were new to me to find myself interrogating the mind of my beloved, relying on his courage, taking many proofs of his devotion, I might pause to re-peruse my words here, without scruple, written. I sign it, before heaven, your Ottilia.

'OTTILIA FREDERIKA WILHELMINA HEDWIG,
'Princess of Eppenwelzen-Sarkeld.'

CHAPTER XXXII

AN INTERVIEW WITH PRINCE ERNEST AND A MEETING WITH PRINCE OTTO

A messenger from Prince Ernest commanding my immediate attendance at the palace signified that the battle had begun. I could have waited for my father, whose return from one of his expeditions in the prince's service was expected every instant; but though I knew I should have, had a powerful coadjutor in him to assist me through such a conference, I preferred to go down alone. Prince Otto met me in the hall. He passed by, glancing an eye sharply, and said over his shoulder,

'We shall have a word together presently!'

The library door was flung open. Prince Ernest and the margravine were in the room. She walked out with angry majesty. The prince held his figure in the stiff attitude of reception. He could look imposing.

The character of the interview was perceptible at once.

'You have not, I presume, to be informed of the business in hand, Mr. Richmond!'

'Your Highness, I believe I can guess it.'

This started him pacing the floor.

'An impossibility! a monstrous extravagance! a thing unheard of! mania! mania!' he muttered. 'You are aware, sir, that you have been doing your worst to destroy the settled arrangements of my family? What does it mean? In common reason you cannot indulge any legitimate hope of succeeding. Taking you as a foreigner, you must know that. Judge of the case by your own reigning Families. Such events never happen amongst them. Do you suppose that the possession of immense wealth entitles you to the immeasurable presumption of aspiring to equality of position with reigning Houses? Such folly is more frequently castigated than reasoned with. Why, now--now, were it published--that I had condescended--condescend as I am doing, I should be the laughing-stock of every Court in Europe. You English want many lessons. You are taught by your scribes to despise the dignity which is not supported by a multitude of bayonets, guns, and gold. I heard of it when I travelled incognito. You make merry over little potentates. Good. But do not cross their paths. Their dominion may be circumscribed, but they have it; and where we are now, my power equals that of the Kaiser and the Czar. You will do me the favour to understand that I am not boasting, not menacing; I attempt, since it is extraordinarily imposed on me, to instruct you. I have cause to be offended; I waive it. I meet you on common ground, and address myself to your good sense. Have you anything to say?'

'Much, sir.'

'Much?' he said, with affected incredulity.

The painful hardship for me was to reply in the vague terms he had been pleased to use.

'I have much to say, your Highness. First, to ask pardon of you, without excusing myself.'

'A condition, apparently, that absolves the necessity for the grant. Speak precisely.'

But I was as careful as he in abstaining from any direct indication of his daughter's complicity, and said, 'I have offended your Highness. You have done me the honour to suggest that it is owing to my English

training. You will credit my assurance that the offence was not intentional, not preconceived.'

'You charge it upon your having been trained among a nation of shopkeepers?'

'My countrymen are not illiterate or unmannerly, your Highness.'

'I have not spoken it; I may add, I do not think it.'

'I feared that your Highness entertained what I find to be a very general, perhaps here and there wilful, error with regard to England.'

'When I was in the service I had a comrade, a gallant gentleman, deeply beloved by me, and he was an Englishman. He died in the uniform and under the flag I reverence.'

'I rejoice that your Highness has had this experience of us. I have to imagine that I expressed myself badly. My English training certainly does not preclude the respect due to exalted rank. Your Highness will, I trust humbly, pardon my offence. I do not excuse myself because I cannot withdraw, and I am incapable of saying that I regret it.'

'In cool blood you utter that?' exclaimed the prince.

His amazement was unfeigned.

'What are the impossible, monstrous ideas you--where--? Who leads you to fancy there is one earthly chance for you when you say you cannot withdraw? Cannot? Are you requested? Are you consulted? It is a question to be decided in the imperative: you must. What wheel it is you think you have sufficient vigour to stop, I am profoundly unaware, but I am prepared to affirm that it is not the wheel of my household. I would declare it, were I a plain citizen. You are a nullity in the case, in point of your individual will--a nullity swept away with one wave of the hand. You can do this, and nothing else: you can apologize, recognize your station, repair a degree of mischief that I will not say was preconceived or plotted. So for awhile pursue your studies, your travels. In time it will give me pleasure to receive you. Mr. Richmond,' he added, smiling and rising; 'even the head of a little German principality has to give numberless audiences.' His features took a more cordial smile to convince me that the dismissing sentence was merely playful.

As for me, my mind was confused by the visible fact that the father's features resembled the daughter's. I mention it, that my mind's condition may be understood.

Hardly had I been bowed out of the room when my father embraced me, and some minutes later I heard Prince Otto talking to me and demanding answers. That he or any one else should have hostile sentiments toward a poor devil like me seemed strange. My gift of the horse appeared to anger him most. I reached the chateau without once looking back, a

dispirited wretch. I shut myself up; I tried to read. The singular brevity of my interview with the prince, from which I had expected great if not favourable issues, affected me as though I had been struck by a cannon shot; my brains were nowhere. His perfect courtesy was confounding. I was tormented by the delusion that I had behaved pusillanimously.

My father rushed up to me after dark. Embracing me and holding me by the hand, he congratulated me with his whole heart. The desire of his life was accomplished; the thing he had plotted for ages had come to pass. He praised me infinitely. My glorious future, he said, was to carry a princess to England and sit among the, highest there, the husband of a lady peerless in beauty and in birth, who, in addition to what she was able to do for me by way of elevation in my country, could ennoble in her own territory. I had the option of being the father of English nobles or of German princes; so forth. I did not like the strain; yet I clung to him. I was compelled to ask whether he had news of any sort worth hearing.

'None,' said he calmly; 'none. I have everything to hear, nothing to relate; and, happily, I can hardly speak for joy.' He wept.

He guaranteed to have the margravine at the chateau within a week, which seemed to me a sufficient miracle. The prince, he said, might require three months of discretionary treatment. Three further months to bring the family round, and the princess would be mine. 'But she is yours! she is yours already!' he cried authoritatively. 'She is the reigning intellect there. I dreaded her very intellect would give us all the trouble, and behold, it is our ally! The prince lives with an elbow out of his income. But for me it would be other parts of his person as well, I assure you, and the world would see such a princely tatterdemalion as would astonish it. Money to him is important. He must carry on his mine. He can carry on nothing without my help. By the way, we have to deal out cheques?'

I assented.

In spite of myself, I caught the contagion of his exuberant happiness and faith in his genius. The prince had applauded his energetic management of the affairs of the mine two or three times in my hearing. It struck me that he had really found his vocation, and would turn the sneer on those who had called him volatile and reckless. This led me to a luxurious sense of dependence on him, and I was willing to live on dreaming and amused, though all around me seemed phantoms, especially the French troupe, the flower of the Parisian stage: Regnault, Carigny, Desbarolles, Mesdames Blanche Bignet and Dupertuy, and Mdlle. Jenny Chassediane, the most spirituelle of Frenchwomen. 'They are a part of our enginery, Richie,' my father said. They proved to be an irresistible attraction to the margravine. She sent word to my father that she meant to come on a particular day when, as she evidently knew, I should not be present. Two or three hours later I had Prince Otto's cartel in my hands. Jorian DeWitt, our guest at this season, told me subsequently, and with the utmost seriousness, that I was largely indebted to Mdlle.

Jenny for a touching French song of a beau chevalier she sang before Ottilia in my absence. Both he and my father believed in the efficacy of this kind of enginery, but, as the case happened, the beau chevalier was down low enough at the moment his highborn lady listened to the song.

It appeared that when Prince Otto met me after my interview with Prince Ernest, he did his best to provoke a rencontre, and failing to get anything but a nod from my stunned head, betook himself to my University. A friendly young fellow there, Eckart vom Hof, offered to fight him on my behalf, should I think proper to refuse. Eckart and two or three others made a spirited stand against the aristocratic party siding with Prince Otto, whose case was that I had played him a dishonourable trick to laugh at him. I had, in truth, persuaded him to relieve me at once of horse and rival at the moment when he was suffering the tortures of a rejection, and I was rushing to take the hand he coveted; I was so far guilty. But to how great a degree guiltless, how could I possibly explain to the satisfaction of an angry man? I had the vision of him leaping on the horse, while I perused his challenge; saw him fix to the saddle and smile hard, and away to do me of all services the last he would have performed wittingly. The situation was exactly of a sort for one of his German phantasy-writers to image the forest jeering at him as he flew, blind, deaf, and unreasonable, vehement for one fierce draught of speed. We are all dogged by the humour of following events when we start on a wind of passion. I could almost fancy myself an accomplice. I realized the scene with such intensity in the light running at his heels: it may be quite true that I laughed in the hearing of his messenger as I folded up the letter. That was the man's report. I am not commonly one to be forgetful of due observances.

The prospect of the possible eternal separation from my beloved pricked my mechanical wits and set them tracing the consequent line by which I had been brought to this pass as to a natural result. Had not my father succeeded in inspiring the idea that I was something more than something? The tendency of young men is to conceive it for themselves without assistance; a prolonged puff from the breath of another is nearly sure to make them mad as kings, and not so pardonably.

I see that I might have acted wisely, and did not; but that is a speculation taken apart from my capabilities. If a man's fate were as a forbidden fruit, detached from him, and in front of him, he might hesitate fortunately before plucking it; but, as most of us are aware, the vital half of it lies in the seed-paths he has traversed. We are sons of yesterday, not of the morning. The past is our mortal mother, no dead thing. Our future constantly reflects her to the soul. Nor is it ever the new man of to-day which grasps his fortune, good or ill. We are pushed to it by the hundreds of days we have buried, eager ghosts. And if you have not the habit of taking counsel with them, you are but an instrument in their hands.

My English tongue admonishes me that I have fallen upon a tone resembling one who uplifts the finger of piety in a salon of conversation. A man's review of the course of his life grows for a moment stringently serious when he beholds the stream first broadening perchance under the light

interpenetrating mine just now.

My seconds were young Eckart vom Hof, and the barely much older, though already famous Gregorius Bandelmeyer, a noted mathematician, a savage Republican, lean-faced, spectacled, and long, soft-fingered; a cat to look at, a tiger to touch. Both of them were animated by detestation of the Imperial uniform. They distrusted my skill in the management of the weapon I had chosen; for reasons of their own they carried a case of pistols to the field. Prince Otto was attended by Count Loepel and a Major Edelsheim of his army, fresh from the garrison fortress of Mainz, gentlemen perfectly conversant with the laws of the game, which my worthy comrades were not. Several minutes were spent in an altercation between Edelsheim and Bandelmeyer. The major might have had an affair of his own had he pleased. My feelings were concentrated within the immediate ring where I stood: I can compare them only to those of a gambler determined to throw his largest stake and abide the issue. I was not open to any distinct impression of the surrounding scenery; the hills and leafage seemed to wear an iron aspect. My darling, my saint's face was shut up in my heart, and with it a little inaudible cry of love and pain. The prince declined to listen to apologies. 'He meant to teach me that this was not a laughing matter.' Major Edelsheim had misunderstood Bandelmeyer; no offer of an apology had been made. A momentary human sensation of an unworthy sort beset me when I saw them standing together again, and contrasted the collectedness and good-humour of my adversary's representative with the vexatious and unnecessary naggling of mine, the sight of whose yard-long pipe scandalized me.

At last the practical word was given. The prince did not reply to my salute. He was smoking, and kept his cigar in one corner of his mouth, as if he were a master fencer bidding his pupil to come on. He assumed that he had to do with a bourgeois Briton unused to arms, such as we are generally held to be on the Continent. After feeling my wrist for a while he shook the cigar out of his teeth.

The 'cliquetis' of the crossed steel must be very distant in memory, and yourself in a most dilettante frame of mind, for you to be accessible to the music of that thin skeleton's clank. Nevertheless, it is better and finer even at the time of action, than the abominable hollow ogre's eye of the pistol-muzzle. We exchanged passes, the prince chiefly attacking. Of all the things to strike my thoughts, can you credit me that the vividest was the picture of the old woman Temple and I had seen in our boyhood on the night of the fire dropping askew, like forks of brown flame, from the burning house in London city; I must have smiled. The prince cried out in French: 'Laugh, sir; you shall have it!' He had nothing but his impetuosity for an assurance of his promise, and was never able to force me back beyond a foot. I touched him on the arm and the shoulder, and finally pierced his arm above the elbow. I could have done nearly what I liked with him; his skill was that of a common regimental sabreur.

'Ludere qui nescit campestribus abstinet armis!' Bandelmeyer sang out.

'You observed?' said Major Edelsheim, and received another disconcerting

discharge of a Latin line. The prince frowned and made use of some military slang. Was his honour now satisfied? Not a whit. He certainly could not have kept his sword-point straight, and yet he clamoured to fight on, stamped, and summoned me to assault him, proposed to fight me with his left hand after his right had failed; in short, he was beside himself, an example of the predicament of a man who has given all the provocation and finds himself disabled. My seconds could have stopped it had they been equal to their duties; instead of which Bandelmeyer, hearing what he deemed an insult to the order of student and scholar, retorted furiously and offensively, and Eckart, out of good-fellowship, joined him, whereat Major Edelsheim, in the act of bandaging the prince's arm, warned them that he could not pass by an outrage on his uniform. Count Loepel stept politely forward, and gave Eckart a significant bow. The latter remarked mockingly, 'With pleasure and condescension!' At a murmur of the name of doctor from Edelsheim, the prince damned the doctor until he or I were food for him. Irritated by the whole scene, and his extravagant vindictiveness, in which light I regarded the cloak of fury he had flung over the shame of his defeat, I called to Bandelmeyer to open his case of pistols and offer them for a settlement. As the proposal came from me, it was found acceptable. The major remonstrated with the prince, and expressed to me his regrets and et caeteras of well-meant civility. He had a hard task to keep out of the hands of Bandelmeyer, who had seized my sword, and wanted vi et armis to defend the cause of Learning and the People against military brigands on the spot. If I had not fallen we should have had one or two other prostrate bodies.

A silly business on all sides.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Ask pardon of you, without excusing myself
Habit of antedating his sagacity
He thinks or he chews
If you kneel down, who will decline to put a foot on you?
It goes at the lifting of the bridegroom's little finger
Look within, and avoid lying
Mindless, he says, and arrogant
One who studies is not being a fool
The past is our mortal mother, no dead thing
The proper defence for a nation is its history
Then for us the struggle, for him the grief
They seem to me to be educated to conceal their education
We has long overshadowed "I"
Who beguiles so much as Self?

by George Meredith

hmond, v4

by George Meredith

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