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A PRODIGY.

A Tale of Music.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

"MODERN GERMAN MUSIC," "ROCCABELLA," &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

PART THE THIRD.
(CONTINUED.)
EMANCIPATION.

CHAPTER V. PAGE
The great House at Caldermere 1

CHAPTER VI.
On the Track 14

CHAPTER VII.
Inconvenient old Times 33

CHAPTER VIII.
Profitable old Acquaintances 46

CHAPTER IX.
Becker's Sister 55

CHAPTER X.
The mad Night 68

CHAPTER XI.
A Genius and his Familiar 70

CHAPTER XII.
The Prodigy's Well-Wishers 79

CHAPTER XIII.
A Dream ended 92

PART THE FOURTH.
MARRIED CONFIDENCE.

CHAPTER I. PAGE
The strange Bride 98
CHAPTER II.
At Kreuth 111
CHAPTER III.
The Bridegroom's Relatives 120
CHAPTER IV.
Miss Scatters 137
CHAPTER V.
A morning Mass 143
CHAPTER VI.
The Bride's first Visitors 149
CHAPTER VII.
Company at Kaisersbad 166
CHAPTER VIII.
Tempters, Male and Female 182
CHAPTER IX.
New Toys and Trials 199

PART THE FIFTH.
THE RAPIDS.

CHAPTER I.
A Royal Visit 209
CHAPTER II.
A Giant in a Net 225
CHAPTER III.
Brilliant Prospects 236
CHAPTER IV.
An unexpected Blessing 249
CHAPTER V.
Countess Baltakis 264

A PRODIGY.

PART THE THIRD.

(CONTINUED.)

EMANCIPATION.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT HOUSE AT CALDERMERE.

Mr. Quillsey had not promised more than he had performed: and to the letter. It is true that his proceedings had been overlooked at every step by Justin the incorruptible. "I can deal with the aristocracy themselves," he would say, "without having a word with them. Why, I managed Lord Tareham, and got the tower six hundred feet high out of his head.—But I am no match for their agents, coming prying

about—so plebeian!"—Mr. Quillsey had a son in the Guards, and therefore had a right so to speak. But whether Justin's probity had any partnership in the success or not, certain it is that Caldermere was pronounced to be the most splendid and thoroughly finished mansion which had been erected in England for half a century past.

It had only one drawback; the people of Blackchester would call it New Caldermere—and this was my Lord's fault; owing to his having retained that fragment of the old house in which, seven years before, so odd a party had dined. To pull it down, he reasoned, would be to proclaim himself an upstart, afraid of any reminders of his past state of being.—So far from this, he had absolutely installed in it one of the old north-country relations of Mrs. Bower, whom the death of her last maiden sister left alone in the world.—It was a holiday for Mistress Whitelamb,—over whom the seven years had passed, without fading her pink cheeks, or adding many wrinkles to her white forehead,—to hear of the splendid reception of the Caldermeres, on their coming

down to take possession. If her cousin, a German Baroness, had been a relative to be proud of, even when she was living at The Blue Keys—what was this to her glory in her cousin Lady Caldermere,—about to throw open the palace of palaces to all the county—Mr. Ogg had even heard, to Royalty? But the good woman's pride was tranquil and innocent. If it made her more formal, it made her more obliging than formerly, if that could be, to those whom she acknowledged as friends and gossips—while it quickened her regret, with a twinge, that some were beyond reach, who might at last have been set in their right places by the tidings.—There were no more Quakers' bonnets visible on the Lower Pavement.—When the faultless pony phaeton and grooms of Aunt Sarah Jane's daughter dashed up to her door—only four days after my Lady's arrival in the shire—her joy was thus incomplete.

"And to think that I have nothing to offer you!" was her natural exclamation after the first welcome, and the first awe stricken into Mistress Galatea, by the mag-

nificent dress and demeanour of the great lady, were over—"though of course, you would despise my poor cookery now; so perhaps it is best as it is! Not a good glass of Mr. Smalley's old port?—Such wine is scarce, I am told.—His lordship, I hope, is well—but he is less of a stranger than you. It is seven years—only think!—since you were in this house!"

"Thank you, Lord Caldermere has not been quite well lately. We should have tried the waters at Aix—but he was so anxious to settle at home at last."

"If it be gout, cousin—my lady—do persuade him to try Mr. Smalley's prescription: Cinnamon and rue, in equal quantities, taken the first thing every morning, in a cupful of new milk, and a pinch of sulphur stirred in.—I do not wonder you were anxious to enjoy Caldermere.—I am sure it is the hundredth wonder of the world.—Mr. Justin was so attentive as to give me permission to take Mr. Ogg and the Miss Oggs entirely over the house and gardens three weeks ago! No! that red satin room is something which I cannot ex-

press! Cinnamon and rue—I dare say you will recollect it without my putting it down. And what news of our dear boy?—though I must give Mr. Justin his due for his great attention to me—and pray express to Lord Caldermere that I am sensible of his kindness in inviting me to pay a visit to Miss Scatters, at Old Caldermere, quite as much as if I could have accepted it. Your doing, I am sure, but I feel it none the less—and Mr. Justin would have sent me in a chaise."

"Why did you not go, Gatty dear?—you must be lonely here in winter."

"Why, to tell the truth, cousin, I was afraid Miss Scatters might think me rude—she is as good as Scotch, you know—if I objected to oatmeal. And then, after that fright at Old Caldermere, I should not have dared to sleep a night there; if I ever did sleep a night out of my own house."

"What fright? We have heard about nothing of the kind—not robbers?"

"Worse, dear—Not heard?—but Miss Scatters wrote to Lord Caldermere about it, I know; for she was putting a letter with

her own hands into Mr. Quillsey's bag, on the very day when Mr. Ogg and I drove over to inquire how she felt.—I dared not have ventured there, I am sure, but with a clergyman. It was the Face which the housemaid saw, and went into fits:—the Face, my dear (don't you recollect), which appears when anything is going to happen."

"O, the ghost, you mean; I had forgotten. When was it?" asked the lady, carelessly, to whom the tale was news.

"It was August the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth—just when the moon was rising."

"We were at Baden then," was the remark, in a quicker voice. "Well—and what was the Face like? O, Gatty—to think of your believing in such things at this time of day."

"Miss Scatters used those precise words, my dear. But Priscilla, the cook, abides by it that before Anne went off,—she had seen a man's face with a beard, and a mark on his forehead, looking in at the window, just at the corner, where there are three steps down to the store-room. She was not frightened in the least,

I mean Miss Scatters," continued Mistress Galatea, warming with her subject, "for she fancied it was a follower of the maids.—So she took the poker in one hand, and her Prayer-book in the other, lest it should be something else (I never should have dared, I am sure)—and she went out into the passage—and requested that if any ghost was there, see it on the spot she might. But nothing spoke, and it was pitch dark, for there were clouds just then. She must have stayed in that cold passage for an hour, waiting and calling on the wicked thing to show itself, quite alone. Neither of the maids would come near her—and the gardener slept up at the new house, to take care of the furniture.—Well, at last, when she began to get quite chill, the moon came out again—and she *did* see something; but that proved to be a white handkerchief with red spots, caught in the bough of a tree, which grows close to the window—and a lot of dark ivy just above the sill. At first, she owns she was startled; it did look so like a Face—so she shut her eyes, and said the Lord's Prayer, and aimed a blow at it with the poker, which broke the

window. Well, she forced Priscilla to the spot, with her own hands, and tried to make her confess that this was what she had seen,—but Anne knew better, and gave warning in preference, and Priscilla did the next day; and, as they both left before nightfall, Miss Scatters was obliged to come in and sleep at The Blue Keys. Not a new maid could she get till Mr. Justin came over and had the window bricked up. But, as Mr. Ogg says, what security is that? and does not believe that apparitions are confined to corners and customs of their own. I would not sleep in Old Caldermere, if they would make me Queen of England."

"The twenty-sixth," said Lady Caldermere, more gravely than might have been expected, in one who professed utter disbelief in things supernatural. "Well, Gatty dear, ghost or no ghost, the Face would have been the face of your favourite, had you seen it. That very day, Charles gave me *this* little parcel to bring to you. I saw him cut off the lock of hair himself. This was ready sealed up," and the lady took the packet from her reticule.

The good creature became inarticulate with tearful delight—and the colour of a peony. She kissed the beautiful tress of dark hair, with something like devotion—and eyed the roll of gold in her hand, full five minutes ere she broke the seal, and read on the slip of paper within, "Golden pippins for Cousin Galatea, from her grateful relation, Charles Einstern."

"Bless the darling! to think that he should have thought of me! Just like his dear droll inventions.—Don't you remember how he picked Mr. Ogg's pocket of his visiting cards, and wrote an H before every name, and scratched out every last G—and absolutely left one at the Bishop's, when he came to make his visitation!—Pippins, indeed!—As if they could be cooked, as if I would spend a shilling of them.—They shall be arranged in the form of a heart—as one does comfits—and framed and hung up till Charles comes back. I have seen fans framed as pictures, and why not these handsome coins?—I vow there are more than I can count! And how does he look? and what did he say? and has he been again to Fulda,

to play on the organ?—Mr. Ogg will be surprised, indeed."

The real state of affairs was by no means to be told.—So the Prodigy's mother, swallowing down the bitterness of her thoughts—for to her Charles had given not even a kind word—made the most of his promise, and progress, and popularity—and told how the boy was gone to travel "with a friend of ours—a most charming person—Princess Chenzikoff."—Then she begged Mistress Galatea to take charge of a similar parcel, directed to "Dear Susanna Openshaw." There was no lock of hair wound round this roll, for the mother had stolen it.

"If I could, cousin—my lady—I would with the utmost pleasure—as he wishes it, though I will say, it was a pity he took such a fancy to that prim being. But they left Number Two five years ago.—Mrs. Openshaw set out with her husband to America, on a preaching journey, and she caught the yellow fever of some blacks, and died, and her husband stayed there, and I hope will continue away. Miss Ann Ogg

has settled it in her mind, though, that he is coming back to the old place, and if so, one must make up one's mind to their prying ways again. The son took to bad habits, and grew tired of Quakering, and no wonder! enlisted for a soldier, and so he died.—Susanna was the best of them, after all—but she never came from Drearmouth; and they say that she has gone out of the kingdom, as a nursery governess, to France or Flanders, was it? with an English lady—a Countess somebody, or something.—I have not an idea where to send it after her,—but Mr. Ogg will ask;—and by the way, cousin—before I forget—I wish you would speak to Mr. Ogg about something which he wants to say to my Lord."

"I, Gatty dear?—what about? Mr. Ogg used to be a good sort of a man,—but he never could endure me; and Lord Caldermere, I know, thought him anything rather than wise. I can be of no use to Mr. Ogg."

"Well then, perhaps he had better speak to Lord Caldermere himself, for he says he thinks my Lord should know that there has been somebody backwards and forwards

frequently, during the last half year—poking among the tombstones and pestering every body about arms and titles,—and Mr. Ogg does not think it has anything to do with the salver which is to be presented to Lord Caldermere, by way of a surprise on his birthday, by the inhabitants of Blackchester, and which I should not have let out. The man, Mr. Ogg says, looks like a mean attorney. He has been here as often as six times to my knowledge. He wanted to ask me questions: but I said I was preserving. —What can it be? He had the assurance to take a gig and go out to Old Caldermere; but Miss Scatters banged the door in his face, and she threatened to set Terror on him, if he did not pack off. She had had Terror fetched from one of the gamekeepers', the day after the maids saw the Face. What can it mean, do you think? The man's name who came and poked about was Bleakmore."

"O, nothing of any consequence! Some pushing tourist or antiquarian. Now that Lord Caldermere is on the spot it is not worth while to trouble him with any tales. He has a particular aversion to them. Well,

I must go. There are some pheasants and fruit for you in the passage.—Good-bye, Gatty dear."

"Nay, this is such a poor visit; but I must not detain you, I know. O, pheasants!—Stay, just for a word. If I were to write a letter to the dear boy, cousin, will you send it with yours—as I should not know where to ask Mr. Ogg to direct to him. What is he doing now, I wonder?"

"O, yes—yes!—certainly.—Enclose it to me," was the answer of the lady, now busy in arranging herself for her drive; and eager to extricate herself from what might become embarrassing.—"Who could have believed," she murmured to herself, as her little phaeton flew merrily homeward, "that I could have had so much pain, in a mere call on poor innocent Gatty—a being with only half an idea.—How I wish we had never come home,—how I wish . . . . There is to be no good fortune for me at Caldermere!—What is Charles doing now, I wonder?"

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE TRACK.

What the Prodigy was doing, would have stricken Miss Galatea with admiring terror, could she have witnessed it.—But what should she, whose heart was so young, and whose experience was so narrow at so advanced an age, know of the feelings of a heart so old, and an experience already so wide, while their owner was but a few steps past childhood?

It had been intoxicating—nothing less—the welcome which Charles received from those Russian people—the old Prince Chenzikoff and his daughter. In the first place, everything which referred to his art seemed

to be brought into a warm, sunny, kindly atmosphere. They had got hold of a genius: and they knew it. They loved music; and saw that in him there was a new inspiration. In place of his being patronised by, he patronised—them;—had his own paradoxes, his own impertinences;—scolded them, set them right—hectored the old man, who was pertinacious in the matter of fingering his violoncello (and what wonder, seeing that the fingers were becoming numbed with chalk-stones!)—laughed at the young lady for liking this, or the other music, too much or too little; and picked out the bad note in her voice, which, of course, she was bent on exhibiting.—Every transaction of his seemed to say, "You would have me come to you;"—some of them, "You could not help having me come to you: take it, and make the best of it—or do not take it—as you please."—Yet there were few days even when he was the most spoiled, the most impudent, the most triumphant, the most capricious—that the boy, lonely at heart, had not half an hour of thoughts, and thoughts that sometimes brought with them traces of

poor Becker.—"He did like me, and love me," he said to himself, "and not for anything I could give him, or do for him; and so, of course, I was not let to keep him."—But, in spite of, or (as morbid people would say) because of all this fever, and excitement, and young experience of failure and yearning—Music grew mightily in Einstern. His Tübingen symphony, brought into notice by his patrons, brought him more than notice. "How do you mean to invest your money?" said a voice at his ear one day.—The voice was that of the Prince Chenzikoff's secretary.

Charles had from the first shrank from this man, who came and went, and seemed to have that life for everybody, which still can imply a life of a man's own, deep-hidden and apart from everybody else.—Once or twice Zuccaglio had tried to arrange small matters of observance betwixt the Prodigy and his hosts, on occasions when the former might be thought to be too insolent and disregardful of observance:—but Charles had then and there set him aside, or ploughed down his whispered remonstrances, with an

impudence which was not without its seasoning of contempt. "How invest?" he said;—"Zuccaglio, I have done with investing, since I promised dear old Orelius to have nothing more to do with the tribe of Meshek.—If I had any money to be kept for me, the best thing would be to send it to Justin, my brother. You know I have a brother, who is a capital man of business, and as honest as God himself.—But I have nothing worth keeping. Get me the tuner, will you? I must play the last movement of my new *Concerto* to some of their stupid Grand-Dukes and Duchesses, this afternoon. I have half a mind . . . ." and the thought of his collegiate audacities would have stopped him—had not the Princess come in with a basket of flowers; and asked him to choose for her which she should wear that night.

The reference to Justin, however—poor, dull, honest fellow!—however useful as an expedient by which he might get rid of intrusive counsel, did the boy no good when he was alone.—O! the void!—O! the ache of heart!—O! the want of some being on whose shoulder he might lean and weep!—

But the quicksilver was soon up in the barometer again:—and the Genius was busied in a new "Ave Maria" ten minutes later,—just as intensely as if, ten minutes earlier, he had not said to himself,—that poor, wayward boy, so full of life—that he was alone in the world, and what was the good of living?

Something of the Prodigy's old impish spirit of contradiction showed itself that day—or it may have been that he was too full of the "Ave Maria" to turn from creation to mere personal display without an effort.—There was thunder in the air.—The Grand-Duchess of Hohenberg-Altenhausen had a toothache; and hated certain music, with true partisan hatred—the very music which Charles had selected. Thus the enthusiasm which the Prodigy was accustomed to excite as a matter of course, was that day weak.—When the Secretary crept into his usual place in the background, at the close of the exhibition, he could see clearly that every one was out of temper—a very little; the beautiful young Russian lady to the length of saying, "I particularly wished you to play your best to-day, Charles."

" She is in one of her imperious moods," said a voice in his ear.—" Pacify her as quickly as you can. I have news for you."

" None that I care to hear," replied Charles, haughtily. " Imperious!—and I have wasted two hours in trying to please a creature who calls Chopin barbarous!"

" Stay," whispered the other, as he was turning away, recklessly.—" I have found Marie Becker.—Hush!"

The Prodigy sprang from the floor and gave a cry, entirely breaking the bounds of etiquette which it was proper to observe in the presence of a Grand-Duchess of Hohenberg-Altenhausen. " Is he mad?" said that great lady.—" Chopin was, you know, Princess."

" Hush! or I will tell you no more!" said the Secretary in the Prodigy's ear. " *They* must not know. It is a bad business."

Zuccaglio's resolution to make a secret of his information could not be misunderstood. From that moment—a moment chosen well —he had Einstern in his power: and that he knew as much might have been guessed

by anybody skilled to read faces, from the slight but sudden retreat of his under lip.

Charles had at once to try something new—concealment. Whatever he tried, he seemed to become proficient in by instinct.—So he went up with the smile there was no resisting, to the formidable Grand-Duchess—and kissing her hand—"Well, your Highness," said he, "if Chopin was mad, Bach was not.—May I have the honour of playing you a fugue of his, before I ask permission to retire?"

How he played that fugue!—but he would have his payment in leave to withdraw: and his peace was made by his fugue, and by his positiveness.—"Well, dear Zuccaglio," said he, quivering with impatience, so soon as they were out of the saloon—"Now, then, dear Zuccaglio!"

"Come up-stairs," said the other (who had never been "dear" till then), "where no one shall hear us.—Yes," when they had arrived in Charles's own room—"I have found her; but——"

"O, don't torment me,—I will not bear it! Go on! Go on!"

"I believe I ought not—I am sure your English friend, Mr. Vandaleur, would say I ought not to go on. At your age . . . ."

"Do you make a child of me! Do you think me a fool? Go on!—Becker's sister found?—O go on, I entreat, I command you, go on!—Found—and where?"

"Among the lowest of the low," was the answer, in a voice full of pity and sympathy. "What could be expected else from the niece of a lunatic and a cast-off mistress?"

The purity of early youth and honour had not left the Prodigy's nature. He sank down into a chair—and his heart seemed to stop. "Are you sure?" was the next question he faltered out.

"I have seen her, Charles," was the answer.—"You know *I* don't mind going about among dancers—but what would the Princess say, if *you* did; so young and inexperienced as you are?"

"Seen her!"

"Aye—and she is something to see, I can assure you!—The most perfectly beautiful creature that ever set foot in Munich—or

that ever *did not* set foot on the stage!—No, no,—not she!—If she did, she would turn Europe mad. So, it is all for the best."

"Becker always told me of her beauty."

"I do not believe that such eyes were ever seen in woman's head. She has a bad voice though—all trained dancers have.—That perpetual leaping and tumbling spoils the voice. Singers eat and drink, and must sit still. But she is a born artist, if there ever was such a creature, flung among vagabonds."

"Becker's own sister!" cried Charles. "But tell me exactly—what it is you mean? How did you find her? When did you see her?"

"The Princess would never forgive me, if she knew that I put you in the way of such people."

"The Princess . . . I am not a slave of hers, nor of any one's, thank God! *Do* tell me, dear Zuccaglio, all that you know. I will tell nobody—I swear I will not—but I want so to find Becker's sister!"

"There is no resisting you, Charles,—but I know I am doing wrong—very wrong,

everybody interested in you would say. Sit down."

And on this Zuccaglio began to tell a story, with every possible hesitation and caution,—but looking full into that honest young face while he told it.—There had been for many years past in South Germany dancing schools for children, from which the Court theatres were provided. One for girls, in Bavaria, was very severely kept, by a woman who had herself been once a dancer,—"a woman belonging to no country, — Greek, Dalmatian, Corsican — like myself," said Zuccaglio, "who knows or cares?"—She had been called on the stage La Farfalla, because of a certain butterfly dance, which had covered her with diamonds in her young, dancing days—and somehow the dance had grown into her name. She was a thoroughly bad woman: and the worse, because she was so rigid in all appearance. "No man," she professed, "was ever allowed to come to the speech of any pupil of hers."—For this she was in great esteem at the Court, and among the clergy: and lived in a grave and handsome

style to do justice to her reputation.—To her, it had been ascertained, that Madame Claussen had transferred Marie Becker, to be prepared for the stage, Madame Claussen having, herself, melted away. The difficulty of finding this out had been great—for Marie Becker's name had been taken from her. She was now called "Signora Stellissima;—shocking Italian, Charles, as you know—but those vagabonds—we all of us do,—take names and make words as we please."

"But Marie always wished to dance, Becker said: and so . . . ."

"Ask your friend, Mr. Vandaleur, what he would think of that form of art for *your* sister," the other went on, pitilessly. "To me, the lot are all the same. A little more—a little less—what matters it? A woman before the public, is a public woman. But that girl may do worse than dance: considering in whose hands she is.—I do not think there is any chance of getting near her, except for people richer than you or I are. When I saw her (by the merest accident in the world) it was

barely for two minutes. The first minute, I was dazzled—no, by Heaven! I was blinded by her beauty :—the second,—when I had time to get my senses together—I saw how unhappy she was—so suspicious—so nervous. 'O,' she cried, 'I am so wretched here!—so solitary! and they won't let me practise half enough; and I heard her tell the Prince, yesterday, that I was almost too old to make a dancer of now.'"

"How did you get to see her, then?"—was the natural question.

"Never you mind. At your age . . . . never mind. Enough to say that I was at La Farfalla's house: and I heard two women scolding in an inner room.—'Marie Becker,' said one, 'I won't have you turn sulky.'—When the older woman came out (I had thought of you, like lightning) I sent her to the right and left, with some story of some Prince who wanted her on the spot.—And so, I had just two clear minutes with your beauty. Ere the third came, La Farfalla was back."

Was all the above history a lie?—Pro-

bably a good half of it was:—but, if so, the Prodigy, having been, till that past hour, himself as truthful as day, had no chance of finding out the falsehood. "She did not seem to be in want, or poor?" he said.

The Secretary laughed a quiet laugh.—"In want, truly! Our Princess has nothing comparable to the cat's-eye brooch which she was wearing when I saw her.—It will do no good, now, your trying to be of use to her. It is too late, I suspect: and would it be worth while quarrelling with such real friends as those you have here for the sake of a worthless girl? Come: you are a man, already, and twice a man in some things. Be a man of the world. Think no more about her."

"Why did you tell me, then, you had found her?" said Charles, with a directness anything but worldly.—"I will see her—I will speak to her—I will tell her about her brother. He will come back, if any mischief happens to her. How he slaved! how he starved himself! Poor, poor fellow!

If I ever forget him! . . . I will see her, Zuccaglio! Manage it for me, and I will be obliged to you for life!"

"How to manage it," said the other, half aloud, with the appearance of deep consideration.—"It is not easy.—Let me think . . . you may be sure I would not injure your prospects for the world.—I know, myself, too well what it is to fight with life, to think of making enemies for other people. . . . The Princess must never hear of it."

He may not have known how every word of his was making the Prodigy more and more obstinate.

"When can you manage it?" cried Charles. "Where does she live? You can take me there, I suppose! Or tell me, and I will go alone. See her, I will!"

"If La Farfalla will let you, that is.—Why, the girl never goes out, but in a close carriage, or in a long veil, to walk, after dusk.—You see, there is some contract pending with some manager or other—and till it be settled whether she is to dance, or she is not to dance—they are keeping her as

much out of sight as possible. What a complexion she has!—for I suppose they don't paint her *yet*."

"You must manage it—I must manage it; and at once!"

"Why, if it were to be at all, at once would be better than a week hence—because who can tell?—But, indeed, my dear boy, you had better, believe me you had better, give it up.—Suppose you could save her, she may not be worth saving; and what would become of you both if you were both to be cast adrift, at this particular time of your lives?—Wait, I entreat you, Einstern, wait; I am sincerely interested in you. Consult your real friends—your English friend, Mr. Vandaleur."

"Where do they live?"

"You *will*, then?—But even if I told you, and if we went, they might not let you see her; they would not.—And suppose she took a fancy against you,—you might wreck your prospects and hers, and still do no good.—O, give it up! give it up! The more I think of it, the more hopeless it seems."

Charles flew at his evil genius, and got hold of his throat. "Tell me! I will know—or——"

"Nay, nay," said the other, disengaging himself calmly, "there is no need to strangle me!—If you are old enough, as I presume you are, to be sure of what you wish, and to be willing to run the risk of throwing good fortune away, for the sake of one who may not deserve it—we will find some hot-house flowers (I think, by chance, I know where I can lay hands on them), and you shall take them, as the servant . . . ."

The word stung the Prodigy into an exclamation.

"As the servant," continued the Secretary, after waiting for a moment, "of a certain count—whom he will not send in livery—because, naturally enough, he does not wish to draw too much attention to the poor girl. —Perhaps I can keep La Farfalla in talk for a quarter of an hour. I will try, at least. —We must not go too late: we must not go too early. Will you *really?* Because then I must see about the flowers; and you must

contrive some excuse to the Princess for not being found at seven o'clock."

"The 'Ave Maria.'"

"You could hardly work at that out of your own room," suggested the other, coolly.—"Be satisfied that the Princess will particularly want you this evening. You have shown a will and a way of your own,—and that is what they do not understand."

"Not understand? But how do you manage? I will have my evening to myself. You do.—How do you manage?"

"I?—O, I am no genius; merely a utility,—never missed when they want to be amused,—never looked at.—I doubt whether she could tell if I had eyebrows or not.—I add nothing to their brilliant circle; and—but, wait till to-morrow, I beg of you.—You won't, you can't get away to-night, without making a quarrel. I told you so. Hark!"

A tap came to the door.

"Go away—I am busy!—I will see nobody!" was the impatient answer of Charles—"and I am going out," he added, valorously.

"But it is nobody," said the servant, who entered,—"only a card, and I was to give it you, sir, directly—because the English lady does not know how long she is going to stay in Munich."

"Stay!" said the youth—starting as he took the card. "There can be only one English lady!—Long or short, what matter is it to me how long she stays in Munich.—Is there a gentleman—are there gentlemen with her, Peter?"

"No, sir,—I cannot tell.—They are two: and at The Hirsch."

"Stay! what can she want with me? She has made her bargain, I have made mine,—and thank God he is paid! and I am free!—I don't want her to make any more scenes! I will not——"

"Wait, however," said the Secretary, laying an iron grasp on the Prodigy's hand,—"Peter, go. Charles, learn never to tear up anything before you have read it! said the wisest of men or women—no matter which. Who is it that paints scenes (forgive me! I have been behind the scenes, you know, to-day. Pah!)—that makes scenes,

I mean?—Let me see!" and he snatched the card, with a laugh. "O, you Joseph! O, you fellow to whom I dared not say a word too much!—A young lady. A delicious miss! Aupin-schow. See how well I can read your difficult English,"—and he handed Einstern the card, and on the card was written: "Miss Openshaw, Hirsch, No. 28."

CHAPTER VII.

INCONVENIENT OLD TIMES.

The room was ill-lighted—the atmosphere was stale—the Prodigy was in that hurry of irritation which deprives its owner of clear sight or hearing. The two ladies were of equal height, equally full in figure; and when the elder of them, turning her head, asked, "Is that Mr. Einstern?" the most remote recollection of the youth was not recalled by her sweet and well modulated voice. The other and younger lady, however, rose, and said, "How glad I am—Charles! . . . I forgot, forgive me, how long it is since we were playfellows.—I should have known you any-

where.—You would not have known *me*, I see; but it is Susanna."

"Well, my dear, and as your friend never saw me but once, and as I am sure he has forgotten where he saw me, I will leave you to talk over old playtimes. I have heard your music, though, Mr. Einstern, and like it very much." And with the air of one whose liking was of some importance, Countess Westwood left the room.

"Yes, it is Susanna," said our old acquaintance, quietly laughing; and (as she turned to the light) dazzling Charles by her serene — almost womanly beauty; — "but think of the years which have passed, since the times of the little grey bonnet.—Ah! you destroyed it, by sitting on it, literally and figuratively. How glad I am to hear of the name and fame you are making! And do you remember the day at Caldermere? and when did you hear of that dear, good Miss Whitelamb? I knitted her a shawl last winter,—and she made Mr. Ogg write and acknowledge it. My poor father was always so curious to see her handwriting."

This, Susanna!—this composed, easy,

highly-bred young lady — who had blossomed out of that grave, quaint, angular Quaker child! He could only trace her former self, in that certain observant manner, and closeness of attention, which no frivolous person can assume.—She was plainly dressed, but without any marking peculiarity to tell whether she was rich or poor. —Charles had already learned that English ladies do not roam from city to city, in diamond bracelets, and with ruby brooches,— and under cashmere shawls, as Russians can.

"What changes!"—Susanna went on, obviously unaware of something working within the listener, which destroyed all his wonted readiness—and threw the conversation on her—"what changes with both of us, since you came to Blackchester! — I remember seeing Mrs. Meggley's barouche at Miss Whitelamb's door—and looking up to it then as to such a noble equipage!—How could I have then dreamed that I should ever become as much of a traveller as you? The lady with whom I am, cannot rest: and was talking to-day of the Himalaya mountains."

"The lady . . . ."

"Countess Westwood: — my friend, I may say, truly, though I am but her companion.—A kinder friend, no woman could find in woman.—She recollects you well:—she saw you once, at Ostend:—and your brother she saw too. O,—and we have crossed another great friend of yours who gave us news of you, Colonel Vandaleur.—I am so glad to meet you again."

It was most untoward that Charles should feel himself at that moment so entirely forsaken by every faculty of reply.—It was not merely the utter outward transformation of the Quaker girl which disturbed him—his mind was bent, with all its fever and all its force, on a purpose, belonging to that newer life of his which he had cleft out for himself! He knew he was playing his part ill—appearing not cordial to one whose heart seemed so full of pleasant recollections.—There was nothing for it, but to burst into high spirits.

"And to think of your not being married yet, Susanna!" was his venture—an awkward one.

"*My* being married!" (how she laughed). "Why, are you no wiser yet? You were always talking on the Lower Pavement about my being married; do you remember? I was telling the Countess of it only this morning, when we found you were here. Why, you know, *you* were to marry me! What children we were! and poor dear Miss Whitelamb, how displeased she used to be with me, though she could not help giving me cherry tarts!—I should like to see the old Flags again. When were you last at home?"

"I have no home in England," was Einstern's short, almost stern answer, followed by silence.—She felt herself on a sunken rock; but cleared the difficulty in an instant, by expressing her warm interest in the artist's career.—"I am fonder of music than ever, though, of course, I shall never myself play or sing. How sorry am I for those who have no pleasure in it!—How tall you are grown! Is your health always good?—I hope so: you used to be so bad a sleeper; and my poor mother always laid it on the music.—Could you not play for us

somewhere, to-morrow morning? I wish to hear you so much, and the Countess really understands it like a master, and I may thank her kindness in having dissuaded me from wasting time over what I could never have done tolerably. Do, if you can, let us hear you. She came here one half on my account, and to find you—for we shall go on towards Styria on Thursday."

It was all in vain:—there was no response for the moment in his heart, to that faithful, attached girl—for good faith and attachment were in every line of her sweet, frank countenance,—in every tone of her voice. Charles was impatient to escape: ashamed, distressed — and muttered something about the Prince Chenzikoff.

"Ah!—Sicily! we were at Bagaria when they were there, in the Villa Valguarnera: and they had a strange sort of Greek, or Triestine, half physician and half secretary, with them—a man bent on making a rich marriage: and who would have offered himself to my friend, had she given him the slightest encouragement. I don't remember ever meet-

ing any one I liked less. For your sake, I hope he is not with your friends still.—How is it that one is aware of the presence of what is evil and false, even when one cannot prove its existence?"

"Ah! true people always are; and only true people!" burst from Charles.—"How you are improved, Susanna!"

"I have suffered a good deal," was her quietly simple answer. "Every one who makes out a life which is separate from those round him, must suffer. It was grievous to give my father and mother the pain I gave them, when they wrote to me to come to them in America; but what could I do? Remain in their sect I could not—some can, I know—but I am no hypocrite, though I was nearly becoming one.—My poor father! I wish his children could be a comfort to him in his old age.—I have written to America again and again, offering to join him there: but he puts it off on the pretext that he is coming home. I hardly wonder that he shrinks from seeing Blackchester again. Now that my poor mother is not there, it

would be dreary, indeed, to him; — for though I should be with him, of course (one can grow tired of perpetual change of place), I should be of poor comfort to him, I fear—differing, as we do, so widely on every subject. Ah! you do not know how thankful you ought to be, that you have an occupation in life, and a profession. I am of so little use to anybody.—Nobody can be kinder than the Countess is to me—I might be giving, not receiving, the favour by staying with her: and yet——Well, I suppose few women *are* happy."—She paused suddenly.

"So sad," she began abruptly, again,—"so very sad it is to be without natural duties,—so sad to have to seek for them. Do you know, Charles, I have become graver since I have lived in the world, and have seen what may be called showy life, than I was when I would have given any price to be rid of the grey bonnet I hated so—the bonnet you sat on. Not that I regret what I did. But people little know what they are wishing!—I am sure"—and she rallied her spirits,—"I have no right to trouble

you with all this. Only seeing you, has brought back to me so strongly those strange days of expectation: when so many new prospects opened before me."

Her listener was full, as we know, of concerns belonging to the moment.—He talked on;—but with no heart in the past —talked matters of taste, and matters of course: — of pictures and palaces in Munich—of the scenery, half a day beyond its plains, from beyond which the Alps beckon travellers.

She asked, in her turn, about other arts in Munich—about the theatres—the opera—the ballet.

He sprang from his chair—and made towards his hat.—"Are you going already?" said Susanna.—"Well, to meet us somewhere I hope, to-morrow morning, to let us hear you play—that is, if you care to meet us.—You cannot tell how everything comes back to me. That little strange old meeting-house at Blackchester,—with the apricot-branches and their leaves tapping across the window, when Friends were silent—and

half asleep, on a sunshiny summer afternoon—and what you did there.—Ah! well, —it was not a bad place—and some of the people were honest, simple people."

He began to think his old playfellow tiresome, as well as pertinacious—not heeding, in his prepossession, how the sight of him had stirred in her recollections of the time at which her heart and intellect had awakened, and had struggled passionately to break the strange cerements within which they had been bound.

"Stop, Charles," she said, fixing him clearly with her eyes—when, after having plunged at his hat, her visitor was close to the door. — "I recollect one quiet summer afternoon in the meeting-house, when a minister got up and said, 'I have a concern that there is a person present who is about to commit a great crime.' —Are *you* in any trouble? I have 'a concern,' as Friends used to say, to think you are, or are going to be.—If it should be so—I would do all I could, and yet what *could* I do? Only, you would always hear

of me,—by hearing of Countess Westwood."

Charles did not, just then, want her—he did not care for her.—Her recollections of old times distressed him much—her frankness more;—her offers of service, most.—He had thought to patronise *her*. Yet, there she was with her memories, and Quaker presentiments and dreams; and her full, cordial confidence obviously claiming nothing from him, save a mere return of her right to enjoy—and to be of use to him, and to carry his cares, as she had offered to carry himself across Caldermere Park.—Here was a rebuke: all the more severe, because no idea of rebuke entered into the sincere and innocent mind of her who offered the confidence. The Prodigy received it as such, however;—winced, grew ashamed of himself, and was rude, accordingly, to his old playfellow.

"Ah! Miss Openshaw, you have not quite flung off the grey bonnet.—Believe in presentiment? Who believes in it? Nobody, now?—I am in no trouble, I assure you;

but I thank you as much as if I was.—No, really; I do not want anybody to take care of me?—I am not going to get myself into any trouble."

"I may have been wrong to speak.—When, and where, then, to-morrow morning?" Before he could answer, the other lady was in the room—she did not, yet, come forward, for a moment.

To-morrow morning?—He must speak to the Princess Chenzikoff first. She had commanded music for to-morrow morning.—He would send across, so soon as he knew himself, and fix the time and place—he would . . . . And with a bad counterfeit of hasty ease and candour, the Prodigy vanished.

"Susan,"—said the elder woman to the younger one—"that is an ungrateful boy!—Come—you are not disappointed in him, are you?—not crying?"

"Yes, I am," was the plain reply. "There are dreams, and dreams.—I am sure, though, that there is something the matter—that he is not happy, and will get himself into some trouble."

"Visionary! Shall I never be able to make you a real, practical woman?"

"Surely, never, so long as I am with you, and you spoil me!"

The two parted for the night, with a kiss; and had both slept well, so they said, when they met the next morning.—But this was not true.—Further, the night had been one of fierce storm and confusion to the Prodigy.

CHAPTER VIII.

PROFITABLE OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

The youth was collared, ere he had got a step beyond the threshold of The Hirsch and its troublesome inmates.

"You are wanted at home," was the Secretary's arrest.—"You are waited for.—The Prince and Princess cannot conceive where you have been. You are to play Mozart's Concerto, in C minor—and nobody can find the parts. Are they locked up? Make haste, or you will make them very angry."

"Very angry? Very well, so much the better! Where does La Farfalla live? I will give them a lesson.—You know we were to go there.—Wanted?—Yes, wanted; —everybody seems to want me:—but *I*

want to find, and to see, and to speak to Marie Becker.—Which way?—How?—Where?—Wanted, indeed!—Am I their slave; anybody's slave?—Anybody's?" His mind was rebelling against the recollections which, but a moment or two earlier, had been put before him. "I *will* see, I *will* find my dear Becker's sister!" cried he, as loudly as if he had cried a sacred duty on the house-tops.—"Dear Zuccaglio, where is she?—You told me that no time was to be lost.—I could not sleep in my bed,—if his sister was to be wronged, or put wrong. The Princess may wait.—I have got rid of my old English acquaintances" (assuming the tone of a man); "expressly on purpose . . . . . Cannot we get there now? It is not too late."

"Almost:—but your patrons—think of your patrons!—Now, you know this is no caprice:—this is no little matter of pouting and changing, and coming back again; were you to quarrel with them.—They have made you their own; and will have that or nothing else."

"Let them!" was the answer of Charles,

now wrought up to the point desired. "Tell them you cannot find me. I am not their slave, I tell you."

"Come home, I tell *you.*—What a night!" The rain was pouring down in cataracts. "But we shall have hard work to find a droschky.—Hollo! there is no standing this shower;" and the Secretary dragged Charles beneath the shelter of an archway.

Another pair of creatures, surprised like themselves, hurried in after them, but Charles was in the darkest place: and it was well—for both of the new comers was perfectly well known to him.

"I will find Marie Becker, I tell you, if there is a roof in Munich that covers her," spoke a thick, coarse voice. "What! *she* is not in a madhouse; though she is as mad as I am. Her mother was before her. Marie has got money for me! Claussen has kept back my money!—They have robbed me,—and I will have every penny out of them!—I will!"

"But, Semler" (the other nasal voice was familiar to the Prodigy), "even if you *did* find the girl—what then?—Now, be quiet!

now, do be quiet!—Let the girl alone.—Are you not content that you have discovered where Einstern is living?"

"The fellow who made money of my music—and who robbed my poor boy, Becker? Heaven!" with a foul oath, "he shall not get off so easily this time."

"You must be careful, Semler,—you must be very careful! Einstern has powerful protectors. They would make nothing of shutting you up again, and pretending that you are mad."

"O, I can pretend too, never fear.—God!—do *you* mean to pretend to teach me how to behave to noble persons?—I have been their equal! You are only their spy—their . . ."

"Well, well, do not excite yourself—or you will come to no good! Have your joke about me, if you like—I do not care so that you get your money. Come away, Semler, you can do nothing till morning."

A hand griped the Prodigy's arm—a hand, the trembling of which could almost be heard.

"This is no light matter," whispered Zuccaglio, almost with terror. "Don't speak.

—There's less rain now. Wait a little, and let them fairly get off.—Wait, I say!"

The other two also had found that the storm was lulling, and had shuffled out into the street:—but Zuccaglio still held the Prodigy back.

"Wait an instant, I tell you," he repeated, in the same hurried whisper.

"They are gone. Wait! and you shivering with cold so!—You are not frightened? Do you know anything of those people?"

"I fancy I do.—I have heard that the girl had a mad miscreant of an uncle, who follows her about wherever she goes.—He seems to have taken a particular liking for you!—Well, he can be shut up again, if he is troublesome. As to the other—I should know him anywhere by his voice. The animal was at Baden-Baden,—I saw him the night you won all that money! But the coast is clear now.—Come away! come home!"

"I will not go home!—I will not sleep in a bed—Becker could not rest in his grave—till I have spoken with Becker's sister. It is more necessary than ever, if yonder mad old wretch is about. You said you

could bring me to her. I insist on your doing it:—now, more than ever!"

"But the Princess is waiting for you."

"I am no slave to Prince or Princess!—I *will* . . ."

"Nothing more is to be said, then. I always keep my promises," was Zuccaglio's reply. Had the Prodigy been a year older in life, he might have been struck with the tone of the speaker.

He might, also, have been struck with another odd fact or two. It then came out, for the first time, that the Secretary had premises of his own, independent of those occupied by him in the Russian household.—Charles was hurried through some dirty alleys, leading from street to street—in that whirl of excitement which precludes close observation—up a long staircase into a neat sleeping-room; which was obviously lived, as well as slept, in, by its proprietor. He might justifiably have wondered why, on entering the room, Zuccaglio locked the door again, and pocketed the key, as though there had been some one in chase of them.

"Ouf!" panted that incomprehensible

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man, flinging himself into a chair,—“what weather to be out in!—There's wine on the table,—is there not, Einstern?—Give me a glass—another—another—another!—This thunder-weather,” his agitation calming down—“plays the devil with me.—Drink yourself—and then go quietly home. I shall not stir out again to-night.”

Had Charles been calmer he might have been struck by other signs of preparation, besides the tray with the wine on it.—There was a nosegay of the rarest flowers on the table, tied up in readiness to be presented, standing in a glass of water.

“You can take those to the Princess!” said Zuccaglio, when he saw that the Prodigy's eye fell on them.

“You mean to drive me mad!” shouted Charles—with the most tremendous oath,—the only one—that ever was heard to pass his lips.—“Let me out! Tell me where the house is, and I will go without you! Speak with Becker's sister I will. Let me out, I say, or I will break the door.”

“No need to do anything of the kind,” was Zuccaglio's answer, in his usual quiet

voice. "If you will, you shall,—but it is against my judgment.—Take those flowers —put on that cloak—and there's a cap somewhere. Your hat is too like a gentleman's.—Have you got it? . . . Believe me! for the last time, you had better not."

There was no need of that air of interest and sincere dissuasion, to pique Charles to keep his purpose. The fire and the fight within him were, of themselves, sufficient. He cared little whether the other went with him willingly or unwillingly,—once that they were out in the streets glistening with the late storm, and deserted, though the hour was still not late.

So the two hurried in silence down one or two entries;—across an odd, crammed, old-world market-place, with its heaps of shapeless crockery under shelter, and booths shut up, and its solitary stupid official tramping to and fro,—as despotic, the while, as if he had been King of Bavaria;—and its wretched, dim coffee-house, with a pretence at a rural arcade hard by the great door down which there was to be found a lovely beer-garden.—Charles saw none of

these things at the time; but they came back to him, in many a sleepless hour afterwards, when he went over that mad night again and again.

They were presently not far from the Isar gate, before a dark doorway which answered to a cautious touch on the bell; up a dimly-lighted staircase; through a second door on the third landing. — He was aware that Zuccaglio exchanged a word or two with a woman in the shadow; and next, that he was in a warm, quiet apartment, with the flowers in his hand.

His conductor took the cloak from the boy's shoulders.—"Be ready," he said, "to put it on at a moment's notice; if any one finds you here, you are Baron Haugwitz's servant, you know! And now I can do nothing more for you—I must leave you, and you must make the best for yourself.—She is coming. You have ten minutes."

CHAPTER IX.

BECKER'S SISTER.

Two of those ten minutes which elapsed, ere a figure like a shadow glided into the room, seemed to Charles as long as a twelve-month. His whole past life, only a life of a few years, yet as rich in sensation as that of many a grey-haired man, was before him. His heart beat so quickly, that the shadow was in the room, and standing still, at no great distance from him, ere he was collected enough to consider what he should do.—It was at first to offer Marie Becker (if it *was* Marie Becker) the flowers, with a nervous scarcely articulate whisper—"*Not* from Count Haugwitz."

It might have been as well that he said so to save the flowers from being trampled under foot. The room was ill lighted; but when the girl threw down the shawl, with a sort of despotic scorn, far beyond her years, —Great Heaven!—the boy gave back: so dazzling was her beauty, so imperious was her gesture.

So dazzling as hardly to be described,—the beauty of grand, changeful features, delicately moulded,—the beauty of a form, possibly over-developed, owing to the exercises to which it had been subjected—but still, perfect in proportion and in grace.—Her hands, in particular, were exquisite,—small, yet not meagre; and her hands would have spoken, if her tongue must have been silent, so gracefully intelligent was their play.—She had fair hair in abundance, and hair well kept too (a grace not universal in Germany); large, clear, deep hazel eyes;—and that colour of youth on her cheek and lip, which defies every secret of the painter's art.

"Not from Count Haugwitz," reiterated Charles, summoning his self-possession—"I

want earnestly to speak with you.—I was your brother's friend and fellow-student.—My name is Einstern."

She flung herself on his neck, with a cry of joy, wonder, and passion,—such as rarely startled the echoes of that false orderly house.—She was aware of her rashness. In another instant, she was apart from him,—glancing round her, with a pale terror, which there was no mistaking.

" O, if you knew," she murmured, "how wretched I am here! and I cannot get away! My brother loved you so much.—But how, in Heaven's mercy, did you find me?"

" Did you not get a letter from me?"

" Aunt did!—Was there anything in the letter about me? She would not let me read it!—I have longed so to see you,—to thank you,—for I love you with all my heart.—Aunt has gone away, and left me,—and I suppose she does not mean to come back—and so, I am here, by myself.—O! I love you with all my heart!"—and it was only the instinctive return of dread of discovery which stopped the girl from again flinging herself on the neck of the Prodigy.

She listened.—"One is never safe in this house,—never at rest,—and I do not know how to take care of myself—Count Haugwitz, truly!" and she tore a ring from her finger, and trampled on the ring:—and then she listened again.—"Did you want to see me very much?—I heard that you were in Munich, a tutor in some great house: but I could not write to you: and what a blessing you have come—for we are going away to-morrow—where, I do not know."

"What has become of Madame Claussen?" asked Charles, trying to gather up his composure.

"If they know here, they will not tell me. I have not heard of her for months. They let me know nothing.—Sometimes they make me practise my dancing.—Two managers have seen me, and say it is very pretty—and then they make me leave off for weeks: but if Count Haugwitz is to go with us—I will kill myself!"

"Was that not a ring from him on your finger?—O Marie! recollect your brother! How proud he was of you. How anxious for you!—How he slaved for your good!

Think if he had lived to see . . . ." And Einstern stopped, in a confusion of emotions —but her eyes met his steadily (the eyes of both were full of tears), and there was no shame on her cheek. Was this innocence? Was it audacity? Charles, though young himself, divined the desperate nature of the situation in which this other young creature was placed.

"Can you say to me truly," he faltered out, crimson with shame, as though he had been guilty, "that you have nothing to reproach yourself with? . . . . that if Becker were to come back, you could look in his face, as you look into mine?—This is a terrible question to ask you—but ask it I must?"

"I can *swear* it," was the instant answer. "The man is so old, and so hideous, and so miserly, in spite of all his rings and shawls! They make me wear them!—but I shall run away, somehow! and sell them till I can keep myself.—Care for him, you mean?—and if I did not care for him, do you think? . . . No, I shall get to Vienna, let them watch me ever so closely—and then I can earn

my own bread, and I will!—Somebody"—(she named a well-known manager)—"has written to me—they don't dream of it—and I have written to him: and I am to choose whether it is to be *Sylphide* or *Giselle:* and to have a carriage to take me to and from the theatre.—If that old, stupid Aunt Claussen of mine had not deserted me, there would have been no difficulty! As it is, I will get away, if I die for it—and get there,—and hire some woman to take care of me, somehow!—No! whatever I do, I will not shame my brother's memory!—A dancer, after all, need not be vile,—and I will dance!"

"There is only one thing to be done! I cannot—I will not leave you, in this desolate state, at your age! . . . . I will take care of you! You must come with me! . . . If the worst comes to the worst! . . ."

"The worst!" was the reply, in a voice almost delirious;—"The worst!—and with you!—Hush! . . . ." and in an instant the girl had ruled the storm within her—and was alert, eye and ear, to be ready for what might follow the sound which had excited her attention.

"Wait outside the house two hours hence," she whispered: "but get away now as soon as you can. My life depends on it. —And tell the person," she went on, with a marvellous change of voice and manner, "who sent me these flowers by you—to do me the further favour of receiving them back.—I am in want of no presents here."

She was giving back Charles the nosegay only just in time, for her visitor entered,—throwing down his dripping cloak on the floor, somewhat rudely, it seemed:—and as though he had a right to do so.

The Prodigy knew the visitor: for Count Haugwitz had frequented the Prince Chenzikoff's house.—By good or ill luck, this same Count was as slow of comprehension as he was libertine—slow in all his movements; as rich and miserly men are apt to be.—Charles had time to observe how Marie slipped across to the other side of the room; how she defended (that slight child) her own position by the simple-seeming careless manner of one incapable of fancying harm meant by any other person.

"What's this?" said Count Haugwitz,

stooping heavily—"a ring on the floor,—my ring. Now, really, Marie, this is too wasteful, even in you!"

"A ring? O—yes! Well,—it was much too large for me, and, I suppose, may have dropped from my finger.—Did the new opera go well to-night?—What are *you* waiting for?" to Charles.—"You have your answer. Go!" and she stamped her foot, with a fixed face and gesture of insolent contempt, that startled the boy out of the hurried emotions of the moment. He never forgot that face and gesture—as one never forgets an actor's.—"Go!" repeated Marie, more loudly. "What are you staring at? Have I not told you?" (This with another sudden change of look and voice, darted at him but for a passing second.)

The Count was lumbering up towards them, beginning—slow man—to be aware, at last, that some sort of scene was in progress. It was time for Charles to be gone. The ten minutes had expired—and more. In another moment, the heavy Count might have recognised the inmate of the Chenzikoff house.

But it was written that chance was to stand his friend.—The ante-room was silent and deserted. Should he wait there?—Wait till Zuccaglio joined him? Nothing of the kind, however, he recollected, had been agreed on between them.—Yet something must be decided on—and dared that very night—and so ignorant as he was of Munich and its capabilities!—He must find Zuccaglio on the spot. For one wild moment he bethought himself of a truer friend, the English lady at The Hirsch. Should he rush back there, and tell the two his whole story—and entreat their mediation and assistance for the poor girl? Ere he had gone a hundred paces, even he was prudent enough to recollect, that were their good will ever so ready, they were more helpless in the city than he was—being merely two women, and strangers.—And what had he done to engage their good will?—Had Colonel Vandaleur been within reach!

but the next instant reminded him, that from the Colonel he could have found no sympathy.—Bitterly, bitterly did he feel his friendlessness — which drove him, like a

Fate, back upon the being whom every instinct warned him to mistrust. There was no alternative. He must find Zuccaglio, there and then—and as he had taken no note of the street in which was that true friend's private haunt, he must seek for him in the house of his employer.

"How he delights in keeping us all waiting!" cried the Princess, when Charles made his entrance hastily, more disordered in his dress and appearance than he had ever been seen there—and with a fever-spot blazing on each cheek.—"But we must forgive you," continued his patroness, devouring him with a gaze there could have been no misunderstanding, had not he been absorbed by one passion—"for the sake of your 'Ave Maria.' Zuccaglio has been telling us how you are wrapt up in it!—But I told you, Zuccaglio, he *would* come!"—And the proud beauty rose, and absolutely put her own untasted cup of tea into the artist's burning hands: perhaps that she might have the pleasure of touching them. Hers were not as cold as ice.

"When will you do as much for me?"

said a handsome, good-natured, empty-headed Austrian officer—one of her train.

"When you can play as well as Herr Einstern does, Count Foltz," was her answer.—"And I can see by your face, Charles, that you are going to play your very best to-night."

"The Mozart Concerto?" said the Secretary, who came forward as tranquilly as if the two had not parted half an hour before.—"I will turn for you, Einstern."

It was easier for Charles to sit down to the instrument than to speak.: especially with those large, languid blue eyes fixed on him.

He sat down like a born nobleman, as he heard the Princess say—to play the Mozart *Concerto*, or rather to play *into* it his passionate thoughts and hopes—and those tender recollections of a friend, never more beloved, never more regretted than at that instant—which had been quickened by the peerless beauty of that strange girl, and the eager, confiding, loving distress with which she had received her brother's friend, and had claimed his protection in the moment of peril.

His mind was in a dream—or rather a

tempest: but the same spirit which had asserted itself so strongly on the night of the concert—which had led to his expulsion from the Conservatory—now, again, calmed him, and gave him a presence of manners beyond his years and experience.—With an effort, which stirred his nature to its inmost depths, he put the storm aside—so completely as even to puzzle the familiar at his elbow:—and during a pause spoke a few words in a low voice to Zuccaglio,—who smiled slightly, and replied with a monosyllable. When the Concerto was over, he left the room. Charles would have accompanied him.

"No! no! no!" cried the Princess. "You shall play for us a little longer—and then, I will let you make your escape to your Ave Maria."

There was no help for it—the torture must be endured. He must sit down again—and during the next half hour contrived to fascinate more new people than dull folk are able to convince in twenty years. The Princess revelled in his triumph. Did he not belong to her?—Yes, she thought, to her very heart of hearts. And she persuaded

him away from every one else, and put a ring on his finger from her own—laughing when she saw that a male hand could wear what had been intended for hers!

"You must play for me all to-morrow morning," she said, tenderly, Charles even thought retaining his hand,—"and I want you to advise me about . . . . I shall be in my own boudoir.—Ah! my dear Charles! if I was cross with you to-day, it was because of the thunder in the air; and that horrible old woman.—You should never try to please old women!—Never, never, did I hear such music as to-night.—But my father wants you!—To-morrow morning, then.—I shall dream of you!"

Then limped up the Prince: positive that his chapel and orchestra were to be opened the very next month.—"What a genius!" had been his exclamation, as he went about. —"My boy," to the Prodigy, "what a pleasure it is to know that you belong to us, altogether!—We must settle you. You must marry!"—and the Prince put another ring of price on another finger. So much for the spell of Mozart!

CHAPTER X.

THE MAD NIGHT.

As the second of the two appointed hours ended—ere the third had begun to strike, Charles was in the street, outside the house of La Farfalla. It was still a wild night, with thunder at intervals; but the rain had ceased.

There was some one wrapped in a dark mantle waiting for Charles outside the house—Marie Becker.

"She is mad," cried Zuccaglio, who came rapidly up.—"She declares that she will not go back to that house alive!—and that if they find and force her, she will kill herself."

"And I will!" was echoed in a whisper

—which thrilled through every fibre of his frame.

"What is to be done? She cannot be left here in the street all night.—Where can she go?—To my rooms?—Impossible—there are people on the stairs every hour of the twenty-four.—Here is a carriage, at all events. Get in, for Heaven's name, mademoiselle.—Where shall he drive you to?"

"I will tell him," cried Charles—and was springing into the carriage, when the other held him back for an instant with a hand of iron.—"Think what you are doing.—This may be the ruin of both of you!"—But he could hold the other no longer—Charles was at the side of Becker's sister.

"Mad! mad children!—How are we to make the best of this terrible folly of yours?"—and Zuccaglio, too, sprang into the carriage.

CHAPTER XI.

A GENIUS AND HIS FAMILIAR.

Late into that stormy night two confederates had sat up drinking—or rather the vile one, which was Meshek, had been plying his wretched, crazed companion Semler with liquor—keeping himself within the bounds of sobriety and vigilance.—The old composer was now shrunk, and trembling, and decrepit; but in his alternations between cunning and ferocity, he was madder than ever, when the master-string of his insanity was played on.

"No doubt," said Meshek, "this Einstern has heaps of money.—I myself saw him win thousands of *gulden* at Baden-Baden.—Then

I know that he has sold all manner of manuscripts to the publishers at great prices."

"Yes, mine!" cried his companion, in a voice scarcely human.

"Probably, calling them his own.—And then the Russian people with whom he lives—you know now where they live,—the old Prince, who is half an idiot, and the Princess—Einstern's mistress—make a hero of him, and keep him splendidly.—He ought to be able to pay you, if he chooses to do so; and to pay you nobly."

"Ought. Yes! and he shall—choose or not choose.—He shall, and pay me interest, too, or I will tear him limb from limb before the face of his mistress!—Come, Meshek, fill again!"

"There's no more in the bottle, and it is too late to call for any," said the other, who felt that it was high time to stop, before his wretched tool became too wild—or else stupidly incapable of mischief. "Come, let us go to bed—that you may be cool and ready in the morning. Depend on me, you shall be righted, Semler."

"Depend on you!" cried the lost creature,

bursting into sudden and bitter tears.—"My God! what have I sunk to?—I! who had Princes and Princesses running after me in my time;—and who was among the first, and the most cherished, who ever else was by;—sunk to going and cringing for my own rights, to a bastard and an upstart!—Sunk to where nobody will own me . . . where nobody cares for me!—Sunk to keep company with a Jew! . . . Depend on you!"—and Semler hid his face in his hands with an abject and degraded misery, touching and awful to see.

"He has never been like this before," muttered his familiar half aloud, biting his lips, and breathing deeply. "Come to bed, Semler—see, I will help you."—The other moaned, but made no resistance. Meshek undressed him partially—and his comrade presently fell into slumber—if slumber it could be called—throughout which he was speaking, and calling on dead persons, and singing by snatches during some hours—growing a little quieter as the day dawned.

The miscreant, callous as he was, could not bring himself to share such a troubled bed; but sat up brooding over the dim light of a

filthy lamp; watching the musician the while as acutely as a jail-minion might watch a prisoner bent on self-destruction.—"Best secure all I can," said he at last, when the paroxysms of Semler's restlessness had subsided out of sheer exhaustion. So Meshek rose, having taken off his shoes, and lifted the threadbare travelling-coat worn by the musician, trying it over with his fingers inch by inch. There might be money sewn into the patched lining.—There *was* a purse in the pocket—and not a light one,—but the coins it contained proved to be of low value.—There was a pocket-book, of which Semler was used to take more than common care. It was mostly put under his pillow—but he had been too far gone in liquor that night to have forgotten his usual precautions.

"What rubbish!" said the Jew, with a sneer, as he turned out the contents; lifting each to the light, and laying it back with a contemptuous air of disappointment. A few withered flowers and a curl of woman's hair, in a little bag of lace yellow with time,—the medal of a saint in copper,—a packet containing some drug; on the outside of

which was written, "Take care,"—a bit of stone with a pasted label, "From her monument," the date twenty years or more old,—the impression of a scutcheoned seal, clinging to the fragments of an old letter,—one of those tiny musical sketch-books, in which composers are used to fix passing fancies—made up the list of treasures.—With the exception of the purse, of which Meshek took charge—the pocket-book, not worth taking, and an abominable ragged handkerchief—there was nothing but an empty tin tobacco-box, and a knife in a sheath.—The knife had been in use lately.

"In any event," thought Semler's amiable patron, "Master Einstern will not spit in my face again. Once let *him*," turning towards the bed, "get speech with the Russian lady, and my fine gentleman will hear of it, I fancy."—Meshek might now indulge in sleep for an hour or two; and accordingly dozed in a chair.

When he woke, Semler was up and dressed; furiously busy at the table,—busy over the little book.—"I have it," he shouted; "I have it at last!—I have got

my opera, and cannot put it down fast enough.—Here—and here," singing in a hoarse broken voice.—"That is a theme for an overture!—That is something like a Knights' chorus, I hope!—This is where the Devil comes out of the silver closet, in the Castle!—This is for Adrianna; and she will sing it divinely—with star-flowers in her hair! She will not call me an unlucky idiot now!—She will not send me away now! . . . . Such a part! Wilhelmina Schröder had never any one to compare with it! Weber shall not steal this!—Yes, they shall believe in me at last!—This will be a real triumph:—I shall go to Tübingen, and work it out there."—The sweat stood thick on his brow as he spoke, and every fibre of his frame trembled, as he scrawled page after ruled page. It was found afterwards that the hand had traced mere disconnected nonsense.—But Semler's face was not distorted for the moment—and showed that Becker had only told Charles the truth, when describing his uncle to have been in his youth superbly beautiful.

Half an hour did the wily demon allow

the madman to pursue his feverish task.—It might be best to let the fit subside of itself. But seeing that no signs of such a change appeared,—Meshek bent over the rapt writer, pouring his hot and fœtid breath full on Semler's cheek, as he said, "Good! good! Beautiful indeed. Why, it is a fortune! You must take care that your friend, young Einstern, does not get hold of this."

The broken strings instantly answered the clutch of the cruel hand. Semler glanced round him, clasped the book, hid it at once—even Meshek was not quick enough to see where—and tottered to his feet, with—"Thank you for reminding me! I can put down the *finale* when we get back. Yes—yes—yes. Is it time to go yet?"

"Not yet for an hour or two—and you must be made neat—and have something to eat and drink—for you look pale and weak to-day—not like yourself—and we must settle clearly what you are to say and what you will do.—If you get into one of your passions you will ruin everything."

The wandering eye, and the quivering

lip, and the hand fumbling in the breast for that hidden book, gave but poor promise that their owner could exercise any self-control or discretion during the coming interview. But Meshek had seen, on more than one former occasion, that Semler could assume a quiet demeanour, for a time, even when the most enraged—with all the consummate cunning of madness.—"Anyhow," he said to himself, with a sigh which was not one of sorrow, "mischief cannot fail to come of it; and if the fellow gets shut up again, why—I am well rid of him! The trouble is greater than the gain, if it were not for the grudge to be satisfied."

And with that Meshek took out a pack of greasy cards, and began to try combinations and conjuring tricks, as composedly as if he were not about to let loose an infuriate wild beast bent on ravage.

About ten o'clock he took Semler to the door of the Chenzikoff house and left him there; on the whole hopeful as to the success of his tutoring. There was, however, some light in the old man's eyes again, which did not bode well—and he was seen

to clench his hands together fast, when after some delay he was admitted.

The Jew, who had already fallen back, loitered at the corner with a smile on his face, which belonged to neither earth nor heaven: and waited—and waited long.—"What," at last he said aloud, grinding his teeth, "if they should have bought the old maniac off?" Meshek had still to wear out another half hour's torment of expectation before he had news of the issue of Semler's mission.—Even in the moment of bringing plans of devilry to pass, the evil ones have not a time of unmixed enjoyment.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRODIGY'S WELL-WISHERS.

The night had been one of disturbed rest to others than the Prodigy and his enemies, owing, doubtless, to the storm in the air. The French novel had been of those strained tales of unwholesome passion, cruelty, and horror, which, as a class, it is hoped have died of their own exaggeration: but the naturally pink and white complexion of the Russian lady had suffered no damage from the vigil, nor from the diseased excitement.—She thought of Boucher's portraits as she met herself in the glass—and felt that she looked charmingly.—It was one of her days

of condescension. In these she would talk with her maid Phrosyne.

"Blue ribbons," was her order, as she glanced down at her alabaster shoulder, or upwards at the reflexion of her fair curling hair. "Phrosyne, if I were to do a very mad thing, I suppose people would say . . . . that I was mad."

"O, but, my lady," was Phrosyne's apt answer, "what would be mad in other people, would not be thought mad in you. —Whatever my lady does, must be sure to please. Sergius was saying only last night at supper, that nobody looked at anybody but you yesterday—and yet that Grand-Duchess passes for a beauty."

"Flattery!" said the lady, twisting a long ringlet round her ivory fingers, and falling into a reverie.—"No other news, Phrosyne?"

"None but the bouquet, as usual, from Count Haugwitz."

"Well: perhaps the Count will get a basket to put his flowers in sooner than he thinks. I to share his homages with a low ballet-girl! He little dreams I know all about it.

—As if I had not been at La Farfalla's—the day, you know, Phrosyne, when you asked me what possessed me to put on that shabby mourning—As if I had not seen the creature for myself!—A pretty Italian, truly!—Call her Stella! why, she is a German, and her real name is Becker! Call her a beauty!—I could tell him how I came upon her tearing his flowers to pieces, and the India muslin scarf Haugwitz bought her, like mine—and ranting about the room, like something mad or drunk.—He fancies I know about her as little, as that I know all about his wig, and his essences, and his paint.—Phrosyne, Haugwitz does paint, I tell you — don't impose on me. — Because he humours papa, and loses at chess to him . . . . am I to pay for it?—Ah! the odious, low creature!"

"Why, my lady, the Count *is* given to intriguing—but the least word of encouragement from you . . . ."

"You will leave the room, Phrosyne; you will leave my service, if you are impertinent, and presume to suggest.—*I* waste a word of encouragement on Count Haug-

witz!—But he is not worth being angry about.—Phrosyne, Sergius often goes down to The Hirsch at night. What has he told you of the two English ladies whom Signor Zuccaglio was mentioning?"

"My lady, Sergius would not dare to tell me anything about any English lady, I am sure. He hates their country as much as I do.—He would be above noticing any English ladies, and so would every proper person besides him.—Santa Maria! how they dress!—But they never have any real lovers, and it serves them right."

"I wonder what real lovers are!" continued the Princess, thoughtfully and almost timidly. "We have such poor chance of knowing—we women!—Who is down stairs at breakfast—any one?"

"No one. The house has been as quiet as the grave, for hours. So bad a night, my lady.—The Prince called for Signor Zuccaglio about seven—nothing since."

"Phrosyne—who is the handsomest man you have ever seen?"

"My lady, I don't know." In truth, the maid did not know whom her lady wished her to name. This was not the first of such

colloquies that the lady and her maid had held.

"Phrosyne, you are in love with Sergius: and Sergius is in love with you. Now, if he only wants encouragement—you should speak first.—I wish you well, with all my heart—and this is what you should do."

"My lady! I and Sergius—and he so much marked with the small-pox, and so fond of brandy.—He is as odious to me, in our sphere, as Count Haugwitz is to you; but if I loved a man ever so much, I don't know how I could tell him so.—Suppose . . . ."

"Are you growing an idiot, Phrosyne, that you are murdering me with those horrible hair-pins?—Ask who it is at the door."

"Sergius, my lady.—It is only an old musician who has been waiting this hour, with his humble duty, and wishes to be allowed to speak to you. He says he knows Mr. Einstern."

"Then let Mr. Einstern speak to him. Why should I?—or stay.—Go, Phrosyne, and tell me what he is like. Is he an Eng-

lishman? Ask Sergius if he has seen him about The Hirsch.—Ask the man if he brings any note or message from anybody at The Hirsch. — Ask him . . . . What are you waiting for, Phrosyne?"

"Well, yes," ran the lady's thoughts, during the short interval of her attendant's absence, "on whom could I better bestow myself? Young—handsome—full of genius —a thorough gentleman:—and I think—I *think*—I am sure—who only wants the opportunity to speak!—How he can love, one can see, one can hear, in his playing . . ." and the Princess was at her piano, lingering over passages of that Mozart Concerto, in which all the passion of the Prodigy had so marvellously expressed itself on the foregoing evening—and so deep in her dream, that she had not counted how much time had elapsed—when Phrosyne came back. —The maid found her mistress in a tender mood,—her eyes bright with tears:—and like a politic messenger, shaped her report favourably.

"A strange-looking old man, my lady—but not at all unpleasant, though he is

poorly dressed. He speaks very well. He says he cannot explain himself to anybody but you, and respectfully solicits the honour of an audience.—Sergius has never seen the man, he says, at The Hirsch—but Sergius notices nothing, we know."

Phrosyne had forgotten what Sergius had observed at supper-time; but so, too, had her lady.—"I will speak to the man," said the Princess. "Show him into the blue cabinet, and tell him I will come when I am ready."

Many a day had passed since the poor insane vagabond had crossed such a threshhold, or had been ushered into such a room: —but housed wretchedly as he had been of late years—inured to every form of penury and disorder—of dirt and hunger and cold— the signs of wealth and luxury brought back something of the old better Semler to him for a moment or two.—"Ah! what glorious china! what luscious flowers!" he exclaimed, as he went about unceremoniously: touching the things as he named them, in a sort of ashamed bewilderment.—The Princess was in the cabinet before he was

aware of it: and her fresh morning beauty, delicately set off by her loose India muslin wrapping-gown, with its pale blue ribbons, and her stately air, added for the moment to the subduing charm of the place.—He bowed as he would have done in the days when he was young and promising, and when fair ladies courted him.

"Are you the person who wished to speak with me? What is it you want?"

"I am, madam.—I want your favour, beautiful lady—I want you to see justice done to an old man who has been cruelly injured and spoiled, and brought to misery, as you may see," and he opened his coat to disclose rags unfit to be shown, "by a person belonging to you—that Einstern!"

"Belonging to me?" said the lady, shrinking back.—"There must be some mistake.—My servant said that you told him you knew Mr. Einstern.—What does this mean, then?—you cannot mean him? Shall I send him to you?"

"No—no! Hear me first, madam," cried Semler, already excited by her tender pronunciation of the obnoxious name. "Let

me tell you what he has done to me!—He has robbed me!—he has insulted me!—he has driven me mad!—I can prove it! I have it written down, every word of it!—I had a nephew—a good honest boy—who was his schoolfellow! Your Einstern got his earnings from him, and taught him to drink—(drink is a deadly sin)—and he drove Becker to that pass, that the poor boy drowned himself! All the money he left your Einstern swallowed up;—yes, and besides his money—my manuscripts—my beautiful music! And Einstern has passed that off for his own, and has played it everywhere, and has sold it!—It is all written down"—and the madman drew out a long greasy catalogue, which every publisher in Germany knew by heart.—"I am finishing an opera now which is to be given at Vienna;—but I am in want, and I must have time to finish my opera,—and I must have money, madam, my lady! and I must have justice—and if your Einstern will not give it me, *you* must. And then," becoming wilder with every word he spoke, "I had a niece I was bringing up carefully to be an artist.—

Where has he put her? What has he done with her?—He has ruined her, I know:—as he ruined her brother; but there might be something to be made with her yet.—Your great lords are not particular—any more than your great ladies are.—I must have my niece back, as well as my money,—and I will, so sure as you stand there, and so sure as my name is Semler."

The Russian lady had none of that presence of mind which can keep insanity in check.—"I know nothing of these things," she said, in extreme terror,—for Semler was betwixt her and the bell.—"I can do nothing for you.—You must be entirely mistaken. Here is money"—and she held out a purse.—"Pray go—go, I tell you."

"Go!" cried he, grasping her wrist with the purse in it.—"Go! Hush up a scandal for such a paltry trifle as this!—You are Einstern's mistress! Cannot you do something for me?—Yes, I tell you—you can and you shall! I have been long in tracking you both out. I dare say *you* helped to get Marie Becker out of the way, that you might keep him all to yourself. Go!

Were there no such creatures as you, there would be no such villains as he is—to waste honest people's money, to rob them of their fame:—and all for a kiss or two, or a sweet word to put them off with! Go!"—(and Semler swore a hideous oath, which shall not defile these pages)—" I will not go till I am satisfied.—Give me my rights!—I will have my rights!"

"Help! help!" the Princess screamed loudly—trying in vain to loose herself from the gripe of his lean hand: and in mortal agony.—" Einstern! Einstern! help!—He will murder me! . . ."

"Call again! don't do it by halves! Call for your bully! I long to have him in my arms more than you can! He was in my hands once,—but this time he shall not get out of them till I have set my mark on him . . . . And I'll set it on you, too!" And before the household, roused by her screams, rushed into the room, Semler's knife was out of its sheath, and had done its work.

"Where is Mr. Einstern?" cried some voice.—" My lady was calling for him."

"Gone off, I tell you!" Zuccaglio was

heard to say—" Einstern has gone off!"—He had hardly time to catch the Princess, ere she fainted in his arms: the blood streaming from the wound on her face.

The servants had at once torn Semler from their mistress, with a fury which his fury could not resist—though he wounded more than one of them ere he was captured.—Then it seemed as if frenzy had exhausted itself, since for a moment he lay among their arms like a heavy dead body. —There was one last drop of fire, however, in the veins of the poor wretch. Before the cord could be brought which was to tie his hands, he forced himself free, by a wrench the unexpected violence of which there was no resisting—and, with a cry and a curse, the like of which few ears have heard, he cleared through the crowd of servants, rushed to the open window—and was a mangled, mutilated heap of flesh and blood on the pavement below!

The catastrophe was seen by Meshek, who was already moving off,—since the screams within the house had warned him of something amiss.—He had, however,

sufficient composure coolly to turn and look, and then quietly to pass on his way. As he was a stranger in Munich, it occurred to no one to stop and catechise him. There were enough, and more than enough, persons in an instant around the dying man. In a paroxysm of rage, the rude Russian servants dragged up his shattered carcase from the stones, tried to set it on its feet—and would have torn it in pieces there and then :—had not the police intervened.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DREAM ENDED.

The English ladies at The Hirsch professed, as has been said, to have slept well during that eventful night, when they met on the following morning.

"When is your old playfellow coming to play to us?" said the elder one—on a note being handed to her companion as they sat at breakfast,—"or—forgive my folly in having a presentiment for once—is that an excuse, Susanna?—I was prepared for it. Do not let it vex you so much."

"Presentiment! who shall tell me to disbelieve in it any more?" was the reply, which came from a face as fixed as stone.—

"Read,—my dear friend—read."—The note was without a signature.

"'A friend of Herr Einstern's,' read the Countess, 'is commissioned by him to offer excuses and regrets to the English ladies, if he does not keep his engagement; in consequence of inevitable circumstances, Herr Einstern has left Munich suddenly—about an hour since.—He hopes they will accept his affectionate and grateful regards.

"'The ladies, if they are interested in Herr Einstern's artistic career, will be glad to hear that he has taken with him a young lady of the highest promise for the *ballet:* one in whom Count Melchior Haugwitz has shown a more than paternal interest.—Both —there is reason to believe—may shortly make their appearances in public at Vienna.'

"Gone! gone off with a dancing-girl!" was the Countess Westwood's comment.—"I told you, Susanna, that he was not to be regretted.—Not married to her—even—who knows?"

"Who knows, indeed?" was Susanna's more generous remark,—her voice choked

for an instant. . . . . "Charles may have been imprudent,—he was always so. He was always encouraged by every one who came near him, and should have helped him against himself—but a profligate,—no, dear friend!—that I will not believe him,—and it comforts me that I *will* not. With a genius like his—and such a generous nature . . . I could not bear to think *that!*—This is from no real friend," continued she, crushing the note.—"I am sure it does not tell us the whole truth—the whole story.—Look at the jealous, jesuitical handwriting—and not signed. Whoever has written it, has not chosen to sign his letter!"

"Ah, Susanna! clinging to straws, as usual. Your Prodigy is gone, it is clear, and you will get him out of your mind soon"—she said with a sigh.—"What it is to have to give up a dream!—But it is better, better . . . believe me, than . . . When you have known a few more people of genius, you will find out how much love you can give them, for how little in return."

Her companion had almost a retort on her lips.—But she curbed herself.—"You

are speaking against your own convictions, to comfort me," she said, quietly.—"May we not go out into the air somewhere?—to the Höf Garten. My head aches too much for pictures to-day."

To reach that thickly-planted, melancholy quadrangle, in avoidance of narrow and fœtid alleys, the two made a circuit round by one of those new wide streets, with their shadowless, stately blocks of building, and their ample causeways, which appear to be laid out for nothing less crowded than a royal procession.—Such stately shows are rare in Munich—and the every-day allowance of a spare handful of walkers, and an equipage creeping along in the sunshine, give to the stranger the dreary impression of its being a capital without inhabitants.—Thus, a crowd on no day of festival is a something of a godsend—and even at that early hour there was a crowd, and an eager one, before one of the large houses.

It was not a crowd to hear street music, neither to wait till a wedding party came out,—nor gathered with any festive expectations. People were talking noisily, and

at once.—There was a growing horror on the faces of those who were on the outer side of the circle.

"Is it some accident?" asked the Countess Westwood of a passer-by. "Who lives here?"

"A Russian Prince, gracious lady, Prince Chenzikoff"—said the pale fat man in spectacles, with a portfolio under his arm, to whom the question was addressed. "Some serious event has happened, I suppose."—And, taking off his hat, he trudged phlegmatically on his way.

"O stop! for a moment, pray stop—pray ask them."—And the Countess Westwood drew her companion closer to the spot.—"That is where Charles was living."

"He is dead! every limb broken. He has killed some one up there?" was the cry.

"Who is it? Who is dead?" cried Susanna, pressing forward with uncontrollable terror. "O tell me what has happened."

"He is dead, gracious mamselle," said a

police officer, also in spectacles, who went the length of taking the pipe from his mouth, in the hopes of a *gulden*.—"He flung himself out of yonder window. It is the uncle of the girl that has run away with Einstern, a great artist.—He has half killed somebody in the house. Mad brute! They say it is not his first murder. 'Tis a shame to have cheated the scaffold.—But he will not have Christian burial, and that is some comfort."

PART THE FOURTH.

MARRIED CONFIDENCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE STRANGE BRIDE.

Einstern's story, which ran like wildfire through Munich, being set a-going by assiduous Scandal, was that of a mere random elopement, without thought of marriage. The Prodigy, not content with compromising a Russian Princess, had carried off a *ballet-girl* from under the wing of no less notorious a patron of the Opera, and magnificent man of gallantry, than Count Haugwitz.

Scandal, however, was as wrong as Scandal should always be.—The two were married fast:—a Priest having sprung out of the ground as suddenly as every strange com-

bination of that strange wedding-night had done. Some faëry might have arranged everything—have foreseen what was to be. —Zuccaglio undertook to communicate the news to the Russian Prince and Princess—and to write, if they did not.—But, write? —why, they would forgive their favourite; —everything he might please to do.

So Charles and his wife were away from Munich,—and alone together. They had barely passed one single day, in the strangest, maddest confusion of spirits ever known to bridegroom and bride,—when the Prodigy —though in years little more than a boy—began to ask himself, "What have I married?" and the only answer that would come was, "Becker's sister."—For a while, the reply sufficed.

"We must learn to know one another, dearest," said he, caressing the beautiful hair of his bride, as the two were rambling over the slopes of that delicious short turf under pine-trees, which surrounds Kreuth, their first halting-place.

"Learn!" was Marie's lively answer:—"as if I had not heard of you week by

week—Heaven knows for how long! As if I could not have drawn your picture before I saw you!—only I cannot draw: it is such stupid work!—Learn!—We shall be very happy—for we shall love one another always—and we shall be very rich! You with your music—I with my dancing; for now I shall be able to practise steadily.—Ragotti said that with three months of regular work I should be ready to appear."

"But, Marie darling, we shall be rich, I hope and trust, without any need of your dancing.—I shall never allow my treasure—never allow you—to dance."

"Never allow me to dance!" repeated the bride, stopping suddenly as if she had been a statue; and with quiet sad wonder in her voice.

"Never," was his decided answer—"I could not bear to see it! I could not bear to hear my darling talked over as if she were a greyhound or a race-horse—worth so much or so much, according to its shape or the colour of its hair—or because it could leap far and run fast.—Set your mind at ease, Marie! you are delivered from all

chances of that horrible life for ever.—You are my wife now."

"Yes—but you, too, are an artist surely! —Never allow me to dance!—to do the only thing I am fit to do!—the only thing I care for!—O, Charles! you cannot, you will not.—You think I should dance badly. . . . I know better."

"My child, I am your brother and your husband in one.—I do not think my dear friend your brother could rest in his grave, if I allowed you to play with such an idea!—So often and often as he talked about it with tears in his eyes! so often and often would he say, 'How can I prevent it?'—I vowed beside his corpse that I would prevent it; —and, you see, I made my way to you, and delivered you from those horrible people. There was more than accident in it. Thank God! you are saved! His sister, and my wife, shall never be exposed to such bad chances.—You must be content with my love, instead of being a slave to every fool who can make the loudest noise, and give you the richest presents."

Marie made no reply—perhaps she did not

hear him: for her eye was intently following a streak of the sunshine which flickered along the emerald turf. "How beautiful!" was her rapturous exclamation; "what a lovely colour!"—and her eyes flashed with pleasure.

Charles gazed on his companion in silent and pleased expectation, hoping that more of the poetry of her nature would show itself.

"Do you know what it reminds me of? I just remember, when I was a child, being taken to see 'The Magic Ring,' in Berlin. O Heaven! that was beautiful!—My poor uncle used to say that never was such a spectacle—never such scenery before or since!—There was just such a green bank as that, and just such fir-trees—and I remember the Sillenberg's splendid pink dress, covered with diamond tears, as she lay on it, with her arm round the neck of a fawn;—it was a real fawn—and she wore many real diamonds.—She had beautiful arms; but the Sillenberg was a plain woman—and was old, when I saw her."

"Was this long ago?" said Charles, in default of something better.

"Very long—ten years ago. . . . . Such things make an impression on children.—He saw it, too,—for those were poor uncle's happy days—but he mostly cared for music, and not for the theatre. Ah! I shall never forget the Sillenberg. I am sure it was that ballet that made me long to dance. You have no idea yet what I can do. See"—and with the abandonment of one delighting herself, and certain that she must delight her husband, Marie flung herself on the grass, and looked up to him, with warm, radiant eyes, in an attitude that a nymph might have envied.

He bent over her, and in silence kissed her forehead.—How little could she dream what that silence meant!—She thought it a pride in her beauty and genius too deep for expression; and in the fulness of her enjoyment exclaimed like a child—"I never saw anybody so handsome as you, Charles! My brother always said that you had the face of an angel—and so I was afraid. I fancied you grand and haughty—but I am not afraid of you—you are better than an angel."—And she changed her attitude for

another one not less exquisite; looking up, as before, for his praise.

Her husband gave it—with an effort.—Her guileless admiration left him colder than could have been fancied.—What might have happened had she seen as handsome a man as himself (he was aware of his own beauty) before he came to her rescue?—It was a thought to be put away at once. She had but spoken in the innocence of her heart.—He put it away—and turned to her affectionately, as to one whose need of protection and guidance he already felt to be great.—She rose, and the two strolled on a little farther, along that peaceful and breezy hill-side.

"When will you write to them?" was the bride's next question.

"I am waiting to hear from the Prince Chenzikoff before I write," was the reply.

"O, I did not mean those people—I hate that proud Princess—they say she is bled to make herself white—I mean your family and friends. They will not be very angry with me, I hope."

"My family may be angry or not,—I hold no communication with them."

"Are not they rich, Charles?" was the next question, in a tone of surprise.—"Dear! how sad!"

"Yes, love—and so we will not speak of them.—As to my friends,"—and his mind ran over a slender list of four,—Cousin Galatea, Susanna, Mr. Orelius, Colonel Vandaleur, only one of whom could understand how such a sudden marriage, without courtship, had been hurried on him—"I shall write soon, perhaps.—And you, Marie?"

"Why, I suppose I ought to inform Aunt Claussen, though she did turn me adrift.—She will be terribly disappointed if I go wrong; and I do not know if La Farfalla, even, can tell where she is at present."

"Then you shall not inquire, dearest.—It is my earnest desire that you shall hold no more communication with your aunt. She is a bad woman—your dear brother thought so. Think of the hands in which she left you!"

"She was not always unkind to me—and used to tell me . . . . but as you wish.—If it is not to Aunt Claussen, I have no one to write to that I know of.—Uncle has not sense

enough left to read a letter through, if I knew where to find him, which I do not."

"He is in Munich. He was, a night or two ago."

"O God!" was Marie's cry, with a scream of real terror—"but you will not let him get at me, dearest! Promise me you will not let him get at me! He would tear my very clothes off by main force, if they were worth anything.—He is capable of pretending to be in his senses, if he could only do me a mischief, or make any money by me! . . . But I have you to care for me now!"—and she clung to Charles with real emotion.—"The last time uncle came to Tübingen, Aunt Claussen had to call the watch, for he was found hidden under my bed—I suppose to break into my drawers, and search for money, when I was asleep.—And yet he can make himself so gentle and miserable when he pleases, that people pity him . . . and afterwards, if he cannot get all he wants, he becomes so frantic. . . . O, I trust in Heaven that he will never find me out.—Do you think he will, under my new name?"—and the young bride spoke like one in a paroxysm

of affright, clinging to her husband's arm, as if her terrible relation was actually in presence.—"Uncle will murder me if he finds I am once out of his power!"

"He shall do you no harm, dear child," said Charles—shuddering, nevertheless, as he recalled *his* experiences of Semler in Tübingen.—Her terror passed from her as a slide can change in a magic-lantern.—She was pacified. Her hand was in his. What could there be for her to fear?

"What a lovely diamond ring," was the bride's next speech—after a short pause—as she lifted their two hands and kissed his.—"You know, Charles, I have no proper wedding-ring."

"Shall I give it you?" said Charles, delighted that he could please her in her own way—and half drawing the jewel from his finger. But he checked himself; for a sudden thought rose in his mind—their all but destitute condition. On joining the Chenzikoffs, he had postponed all consideration of the munificent arrangements as to salary that they eagerly pressed on him—had lived with them as one of their own family, and reluctantly

taken only such presents as were required by his personal wants.—He could not form the least idea whether they would recollect as much now—neither how far he might cease to belong to them, being no longer their inmate.—He might want the diamond—but he could not say a word of this to Marie—so he laughed his own question off.—"Do you want to get my diamond from me already?—Supposing I were to ask the giver's leave first?"

"Did a woman give it to you? that white Princess?—They told me that she could not even walk a *Polonoise* in time, though she is so fine a player!—I wish I could play, Charles, as you like the pianoforte best.—Did she give it you?"

"Ah, Fatima, curiosity already! Yes, my love—but I do not value it for her sake—only . . . and your ring is finer. Who gave it to you?"

"I don't know! I forget! I won't let you be jealous! I *won't* tell you," and she wound herself round him in the loveliest of caressing attitudes. But he knew the ring

again.—It was that from Count Haugwitz he had seen her trample on.

The sight was not a pleasant one, under the best of constructions to be put on it;—and again Charles had to thrust away strange questioning fancies. So he lightly talked about theatres and singers—unable, for the moment, to return to the only other subject, which, so far as he had discovered, the two had in common—the memory of Marie's brother, for whose sake he had rushed into marriage with Becker's sister. — As they turned towards home, he had time to think (and the thought never parted from him afterwards) that his free life was over.—He had taken upon himself the joys and the griefs of another; the extent of whose will and power to share his pleasures and his cares, he had yet to discover.

So lonely!—though he had been married for so few hours! It was a relief, not without difficulty and reluctance mixed in it, to write a simple account of all that had happened to Colonel Vandaleur.

"He will but think me half mad, dear

prejudiced man!" said the writer to himself; "but he has always done so from the first."— "You will hear all manner of versions and reports, I have no doubt," were the words with which his letter closed; "but whatever else I can do or not do,—you know that I tell you the truth;—and this it is, neither more nor less. Further, you are the only living person to whom I care to tell it."

"Yes, the only one," he spoke aloud, folding up the letter with almost violence: and driving back into his mind a suggestion which had occurred to it, with some slight relenting emotion. "No. I will not give those others that satisfaction. They would think I was humbling myself—fancying I was wanting a present. Had it not been *for them*, I should not have been married!"— And he broke away the thought that stung him, and yet which he courted, as though there was self-excuse in the pain—and joined his young and beautiful wife — Becker's sister.

CHAPTER II.

AT KREUTH.

The Prodigy and his wife had not long to wait for news of the Chenzikoffs.

It will be believed that the tragedy which had darkened the house lost nothing under the hands of Zuccaglio, when, in fulfilment of his promise, he wrote to the new-married pair, and acquainted them with all that had passed.

"The Prince," he said, "desired Charles Einstern to be apprised, that though no direct blame could be laid on him for so frightful a scene as that of the morning of his flight,—the nature of his past associates and their connexions, and the step taken by himself,

made it obvious that everything like intercourse betwixt them must cease, there, then, and for ever.—The Princess," concluded the letter, "has not yet recovered her senses wholly, and suffers acute pain. The wound across the cheek, though not dangerous any longer, is deep.—She will be disfigured for life."

Rare tidings these for the first days of a wedded life without love! It was impossible for Charles not at once to feel the relief of riddance from such a fearful spectre as his wife's relative—Semler—whose last purpose had obviously been to lie in wait for those by whom he fancied himself wronged—but this seemed to make the manner of his death doubly hideous. There was something of blight and omen in it. His strange marriage contract (Charles felt) was attested by a stain of blood;—by a horror associated with the event which no years to come could obliterate. The distress and confusion of the Russian household,—the injury which he had unwittingly brought into it—the natural severance of himself from his patrons, were, for the moment,

scarcely adverted to :—save to make him feel severely how Fate seemed resolute to break every link which bound him to his fellow-creatures, unless it should prove . . . . . His wife (he was hardly used to the name yet) must be told of Semler's death.

It was with a perplexed and heavy heart that he sought her—totally ignorant of the mood in which she was able to meet such painful news. She was singing, as dancers generally sing, in a thin worn voice, some trifle of a students' song—while her hands were knitting together a heap of natural flowers that lay in her lap. The wreath was just finished, and she was trying it on her head, with the grace which distinguished every one of her actions.—Even her little start on being interrupted—when her husband came in with the Munich letter—was worth seeing.

"Marie, my child, I have serious news for you."

The bride's large beautiful eyes turned upon him, but without answering seriousness. Perhaps she did not know his face

well enough to understand its workings of controlled agitation.

"How serious?—What should make you serious?—Come, I would rather hear when we shall start for Vienna."

"There is nothing for us to wait for now," was the reply, in the same grave and trembling voice.

Marie rose, let her flowers drop, and clapping her hands, danced round the room in a paroxysm of gaiety.

"O, delightful!—to-morrow, then, dear, —do let it be to-morrow! I so long to see Vienna."

"I am sorry to interrupt your joy, dear child; but Death is serious! This letter tells me of a death, and it is a very sad one."

"If it make you sad, why yes," was her winning reply, "but for *me!* Why, you know, I have nobody in the world that I care for, save you,—now that my brother is dead! All the rest I am afraid of."

"You need be afraid of some among them no more, Marie! It is your unfortunate Uncle Semler."

The young wife stood transfixed, as unable to take in the truth, while he acquainted her with the contents of Zuccaglio's letter, as tenderly as possible—softening its shocking details.

She was shaken, and wept a little. Perhaps the suddenness of the shock—perhaps her distance from the spot—made it difficult for her to conceive the reality of so awful a close to an existence so wild and wasted—for, in the midst of her hysterical tremblings, she kept on repeating—"But is it true that he *is* dead?—Are you certain that Uncle Semler is dead? He tried once to wound me with his knife.—And once, when he had gone off into his fits because Aunt Claussen had no money for him, he set off to find my brother,—as if, poor fellow! Jacob had anything to give."

"Well, dearest, it is all over!"

"O yes! yes!" but she went back again to her question: "Is it sure he is dead? because we must have a mass said for him. —Aunt Claussen set up four masses for my poor brother. We will wait till we get to Vienna. I know people there who know

all the Priests, and will tell us the best altars. We must have mass said at a lucky altar: and with music.—I dare say you have some music that will do, and it will be grander so."

"There, there!" said the husband, kissing her throbbing forehead and leading her to a couch. "We will settle everything later. Try to sleep, dear, till I come back. Now I must be alone for half an hour. I have much to think about."

It was necessary for Charles to be alone—in the open air—but to find comfort in solitary thought was not easy: so entangled was the maze on every side.—WHAT was the real nature of the creature he had so rashly taken to his bosom? Was it altogether a superficial nature? or were there depths in it which had never been stirred? She had spoken in such a strange, frivolous manner about that service for the dead! and had seemed with it to dismiss the terrible subject from her mind. Had she, then, no feeling beyond a wild semi-animal instinct for affection to him?—Was she not tender and human and loving as other creatures are,

with all that amazing beauty and natural grace? He had been made old, recollect, before his time,—and his doubts might well be those of eight-and-twenty; not eighteen.

He was borne down by them for only a moment.—Since his own act had placed him beyond the reach of any earthly assistance, he was thenceforth to rely on himself, and himself alone: on the energy, not the idleness, of Genius. He would not look back, he would stifle everything like regret; —though something like a sting would make itself felt as he thought of Susanna,—as he wondered whether Justin ever recollected him,—and imagined the utter disapproval with which Mr. Vandaleur would receive the tidings of his marriage.

He had roamed some little distance from their lodging—still along that crisp turf, and under those tall fir-trees which are so fragrant in the evening air. On a bank, with a few primitive winding steps cut in the ground, stands (stood then, at least) one of those small rural chapels which are frequent in such districts. The door was open, and the tender late western sunshine lay on the

pavement within. The peacefulness of that mountain place of worship was not to be resisted. He went in softly.

It was a poor chapel, with that tawdry bedizened altar, which all good Protestants are bound to mock at. Up on the white-washed walls, in their wooden frames, hung a number of barbarous votive pictures, showing how one Hans had been marvellously rescued from being drowned in a swollen stream, which he was crossing too late, — how one George, though he had fallen over a cliff, had risen up unhurt, thanks to the holy Bonifacius,—how one Gretel's three daughters had been miraculously called back from the gates of death by our blessed and pitying Lady of the Seven Sorrows.—Coarse enough were these humble records, yet they seemed to tell of prayer and solace and hope which had entered there,—as did the figure of a brown old peasant woman kneeling at the rails of the altar, holding a child's hand in her own, and muttering over her rosary intently.

Charles sat down on a bench close to the door, and burying his face in his hands, re-

mained there motionless—how long he knew not.—The sky was darkening when, at last, he rose to turn homewards;—but his mind was something clearer, and more able to face what might be to come, than it had been when he had gone in.

One idea which had some small support in it, had suggested itself amid the good resolutions and the high aspirations of that hour of meditation. "I will write," he said, "to Mr. Orelius. He is the only human being who knows enough to believe me, and yet to make allowances.—I will write and tell him everything; and if Semler has left any debts in the town, I will pay them for my poor Becker's sake. We will go to Vienna, and I must set to work like a man."

CHAPTER III.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S RELATIVES.

The loveliest summer night ever recollected at Caldermere—when every window was opened, and accordingly the house was filled with the scent of the royal red roses, which clustered by thousands on thousands over the rails of the terraces—when the sky had that intense limpid glow which travelled folk are apt to aver is never to be seen in this ungenial England of ours—found the master of the palace sitting in his exquisitely comfortable study, alone.—His wife never sat with him in an evening when there was no company—and, for a wonder, Justin was then the only inmate of the great house.

To outward view, Lord Caldermere was at

the height of worldly prosperity, and he knew it. The political crisis, on which he and Mr. Pendragon had breakfasted at Baden-Baden, might, by bringing on a war, seriously damage his fortunes: but the peril was not imminent. Somewhat of languor had entered into his constitution, making him less actively prescient than he had been in the years when he was building up his tower of strength—and he was, therefore, not vexed with speculations as to whether the danger might not arrive. In one sense of the word, he had become more contented with the present than he used to be:—could not, or would not, anticipate any vicissitude of fortune; and as little plan any new speculations such as those which had placed him in such pride and affluence.—On the other hand, the sense of insecurity which haunted his secret chamber—the instinct or impression based on a thousand minute circumstances that his wife had deceived him—made him more solicitous than of old that his greatness should be duly accredited and acknowledged in public. Such reputation amounted, in some measure, to capital in the

bank.—And thus, among the events of the time present, he laid great stress on the expected visit of a Royal personage—drawn aside from a provincial progress (said the gossips of May Fair), " absolutely by curiosity, my dear, to see that man's place—Caldermere."—Yet the gossips of May Fair had not been ashamed, in their height and mightiness, of participating in the sentiments of Royalty—and of (some indirectly, a few, and these the mightiest, directly) requesting to be permitted to take Caldermere in their way—whether betwixt Durham and Norwich, or else on the road from Devizes to Caermarthenshire.—Lady Caldermere answered no letter of the kind without ascertaining her lord and master's pleasure. He had some seven or eight such in his hand at that very moment: and any one who could have seen, might have detected a certain curl of the lip, as he held them fast,—showing that the strong man was human enough to enjoy the power of selection and steady refusal. Lady Caldermere would only rise in request by asserting her own free will; and such tie as remained between them lay

in the outward position of his wife, as a part of his prosperity.—"I will settle this with Lady Caldermere myself," said he, half thinking aloud,—"but they are mistaken, if they think they can make her dictate to me who is to be invited here. — Ah! Justin! you should not move about so quietly.—It has given me the bad habit of starting.—It looks like listening.—Are there many letters?"

"A good many!"—The young man's hands were, in fact, full.

"Is there an answer from Quillsey? Will he undertake to have everything ready by the twenty-fourth? I won't have people hammering and rushing about the house at the last moment."

"Yes, sir, Quillsey says it will be difficult—but he can manage it for you."

"Of course, for whom would he *not* manage it? I may ask him, for aught I know, to come down here, when *they* come. If anything goes wrong, it might be as well to have some one on the spot who is responsible.—No more business, I hope and trust, to-night.—My head aches with this hot weather."

"I am afraid, sir, that I ought to trouble you.—Here is a long letter from Mr. Torris, which I have opened and read. You told me to read all your town letters while these preparations have been going on."

"Why, of course. Well, what has Torris to say to me more than usual?"

"It is not a letter, sir;—it is a memorial on a subject of great importance."

"O of course, if it comes from him!—I verily believe Torris would like to file a bill for every watercourse one wants to make. However, he is always on the safe side, as every man's lawyer should be. What has Torris in hand now? Give me the substance of it: and don't be longer than you can help. I have enough to think about, as it is, without his solemn nonsense."

"You had completed the purchase of Caldermere, you know, before I came to you:—I believe,—completed it: and had consulted Mr. Quillsey?"

"To be sure I had.—Is Quillsey trying to take advantage of me, and raking up the old nonsense about what he was not let to carry out? His accounts were settled year

by year. The man does his work better than anybody else: and so I put up with his ridiculous airs. Any new man brought in now would make patchwork of it.—These people, with their jargon about art, are the same, one and all,—a grasping, false set, depend on it. But if Quillsey be too ridiculous, there is a limit. High art or low art—neither he nor any other man shall drive me into a corner."

"It is nothing about Mr. Quillsey—I only named him by accident.—But you were satisfied that you bought the estate Caldermere with a clear title . . . Were you not?"

"What do you mean by asking? Have you found me a man of business, or not?"

"Mr. Torris seems to apprehend that the right of the late possessor of Caldermere to sell, or even to inherit it, may, possibly, come to be disputed."

"Eh! indeed, does he?" said Lord Caldermere, reining in the impatience of his tone; "and what makes Mr. Torris apprehend this?—Give me the substance, I say—I can read the memorial in detail for myself."

The substance of the memorial was this, recounted by Justin more succinctly than it shall be told here—because in his case explanations were unnecessary to make its bearings clear to those who had never personally, or by deputy, studied the title-deeds of the great Caldermere estate.

The tale was one to make a nervous person thoughtful:—and even Justin was amazed at the utter coolness with which it was received by Lord Caldermere. He sat playing with a paper-knife and yawning, and folding and unfolding the *Gazette of High Life*, as the youth went on to communicate what follows.

The last owner of Caldermere, Mr. Torris reminded his client, had inherited the estate from his uncle—a strange, solitary, capricious man, one Mr. Berrington, whose two sisters had married and died young—each leaving a son: the two young men being about the same age.—Two young men could not have been more totally different in character: the one being as high-bred a gentleman as the other was a profligate.—The former, Mr. Berrington had announced, was

to inherit Caldermere. A will to that effect was extant.—But it chanced that, by some turn of despotic whim, the old man and the heir presumptive had quarrelled—that the latter had gone, and remained, abroad: and had been in the East at the time of Mr. Berrington's death.—His cousin had taken advantage of his absence; had presented himself at Caldermere; had ingratiated himself with the old man, to the length even of cajoling him into a new will: by which the first inheritor was superseded. —The profligate reaped small advantage from his success, being chin-deep in debt before he came to enjoy it. After a few years of floundering and fighting on—unable the while to check his ruling propensity of haunting every gaming-table in Europe—after having raised money east, west, north, and south, to be flung away as fast as it was raised—there had been no alternative for him save to sell Caldermere, and to wear out the remaining disrespectable and disgraced portion of his life on an allowance from his creditors.—He had survived the sale only three years: and had died in great

misery and remorse;—having, the tale went on to say, made a confession on his death-bed that the will, under which he had inherited the property, was a false one.—To substantiate the truth of this confession, it was said that people had been for some time at work collecting evidence, and in search of those whose testimony would place the matter beyond dispute.—They were in trace of persons who had signed the false will, and were supposed to be abroad—in America.

"And this is the newest discovery of Torris.—Why, I have known about it this twelvemonth!—No one ever bought an estate from the last blackguard of a worn-out family, without hearing of it afterwards. There's always some pettifogger or other trying to find a mare's nest, and make money of it!—These Blackchester people have picked up the talk of some railway surveyor, or ecclesiastical commissioner.—Why, I had not been at Caldermere a week, before Mr. Ogg made the labour of coming out, full of the subject,—how a man whose name was Bleakmore had been prowling and prying about here, and cross-

questioning old tenants and workpeople, and copying tombstones.—He had been with his fine story to Miss Scatters—but she has a head on her shoulders, and sent the fellow about his business.—Pooh! Did you suppose I did not know all about it?—I'll have a talk with Torris when I go to town: and, by the way, I had as well go up to-morrow."—And down Lord Caldermere glanced at the *Gazette of High Life* in his hand, with as much apparent interest as if he had nothing to think about more solid than "Modes of the Month," or "Fashionable Intelligence."

Justin had not then to be made acquainted with the resolute will of his patron—nor to learn, for the first time, that seven years may change sound judgment on some points into prejudice and obstinacy. But he was little aware of the extent to which these were indurated by decaying health and suspicion gnawing at the heart: and so he stood for a moment in silent wonder at Lord Caldermere's impassive indifference respecting what most new-made Lords would have thought was an

ugly story—when he was startled by a start on the easy-chair, and a violent oath, after the pattern of those which, in the days of The Blue Keys, had so greatly shocked Joshua Openshaw. "By ——!" exclaimed Lord Caldermere,—"I could have sworn that something of this kind would happen! —Go to your mother, Justin.—Tell Lady Caldermere I shall be glad—I wish—to speak with her."

Justin obeyed on the feet of foreboding: and had but time to add to his message, "My Lord has received some bad news, I fear."

"Nothing, I dare say, that concerns me," said the lady, languidly; for Time had taught her, too, to dissemble, however uneasy she might be.—"Well, Caldermere, what is it?"

"Sit down, Lady Caldermere.—I suppose you are aware that your proceedings, and those of your family, are of great interest to the newspapers just now?—Justin, I shall want you."

"O, our party! Surely, Caldermere—I think you must have heard enough of the invitation list—I have not troubled you with half the letters I have had—or has Mr.

Quillsey been advertising the new conservatory and the fountains? Poor man! he must work his way! and he takes trouble enough about it, I must say."

"No—though I have no doubt that the visit to Caldermere has had something to do with the news I mean being inserted in this week's number.—Justin, read the paragraph to your mother."

The paragraph was headed

"THE DON JUAN OF THE PIANOFORTE.

("*From our Own Correspondent, Munich.*)

"One of the romances of real life, proving Truth to be stranger than Fiction,—has, within the last few days, monopolised the attention of the aristocratic circles of the Athens of South Germany.—This has been the elopement of young Carl Einstern, the celebrated pianist, whose performances at the Courts of Europe have already excited so lively a sensation, with a dancing-girl, notoriously under the patronage of one of the magnates of Austria—and whose *début* at the Kärnther Thor Theatre, at Vienna,

has for some months been expected with breathless impatience.—The affair has been altogether one of the most truly romantic cast. — The young lady, whose dazzling beauty has been a theme with all the artists of this talented metropolis, was only withdrawn from the nunnery in which she had been placed by her munificent patron, by a series of the most adroit stratagems ever devised by the wits of genius in Love. Nor has this thrilling romance of Passion been without those graver emotions which recal the deep tragedies of the Middle Ages. Murder and suicide have figured in the terrible dance: and one of the brightest stars in Europe's galaxy of *Princely* Female Beauty lies a melancholy wreck of the Past—defaced by an assassin beyond recovery. Consideration prohibits further explicitude. — The hero of the daring deed is known as the son, by a former marriage, of one of our most brilliant leaders of English Fashion,— a lady now on the eve of receiving in her midland palace, 'before which the past Oriental magnificence of Fonthill pales its ineffectual fire' — a distinguished Royal

party, and several of the foreign ambassadors *en villeggiatura*."

"It is a lie!" exclaimed Justin, who had forced himself through the flowery paragraph with the utmost difficulty, and now flung down the paper in disgust.

"Put forward, no doubt, to annoy us at the time present.—What did I always tell you, Lady Caldermere?" said her Lord, with an icy politeness. "Are you satisfied?—What do you say now?"

"What Justin says,—it is a lie!"—faltered the lady—her parched lips hardly able to utter a word,—"a lie, published to annoy you, Caldermere."

"Then it is a dull failure. How should it annoy me?—I washed my hands of his concerns, as you know, long ago. But I apprehend it is not a lie! He has, from first to last, been consistent in idleness, folly, and profligacy. First expelled from the school, where every care had been bestowed on his education;—in debt—in low company—then the town-talk of a gambling-hell!—lastly, the hero of a brothel-adven-

ture! (I suit my language to my subject, madam.)"

"Sir!" cried Justin, starting up, "this is cruel to my mother. The news is bad enough as it is—though I am sure it is a lie."

"If news it be, it cannot surprise you, Lady Caldermere. But you stopped, Justin, before you had read all;"—and he took up the paper and read: "'The pair are shortly expected in England—magnificent offers having been made to both by the manager of Her Majesty's Theatre.'—This was why I wished to speak to you in the presence of your elder son.—If they do come to England, Charles and this dancing-girl—understand me, there shall be no mistake about the matter. No intercourse must be held with them—neither you,—nor you, Justin, must hold any communication with him — let his extravagance be ever so great—let him want to borrow money ever so badly—for want to borrow money he will!"

"He will *not*," cried the mother, stung out of her shallow indifference of manner into utter carelessness of what she said—"I have plenty of money laid by for him!"

"But, sir, with all respect," struck in Justin, with growing emotion (before it could be seen whether Lord Caldermere had remarked his wife's words or not), "I had better at once speak to you as openly as you speak to me. I should not be honest else.—I will not ask you for a penny—I will not defraud you of an hour which belongs to your affairs.—My mother must act for herself—she stands in a position different to mine—I shall not interfere. But whatever he may have done, I will not cast Charles off!—He is my brother, after all!—No, sir, I will not! He may not want me now!—I am of no use to him!—I am in no correspondence with him!—I am not his equal: for he is a Genius, and I am not—but if he should get into misfortunes, and should want a steady arm and a loving heart to lean upon—he shall find them in me!—yes, and without my failing in duty or gratitude to you—I can never forget that we were boys together in Germany. Sir, I shall never say this to you again!"

"There is no need you should," was the impassive reply—"I have heard you.—I

rely on your promise not to interfere: and if you choose to throw yourself away on a miserable being like that; why, take the consequences.—The subject is closed between us for ever.—Good night. Stay: one word more. While I am away this time, you will open none of my letters."—And, much as a statue might walk, Lord Caldermere left the room—leaving behind him misery for his wife; and for Justin, a tumult in which there was a sharp pain—not merely on the account of the brother in whose behalf he had spoken—but the pain attaching itself to the withdrawal of trust after many years.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS SCATTERS.

It seemed as if fated that the Prodigy's affairs were to trouble every creature near and far who had any connexion with them. —Had the news of his flight from Munich with Marie Becker arrived four-and-twenty hours later, Justin would have still been in Lord Caldermere's confidence—and Lord Caldermere might have told him that the real object of his sudden visit to London was a serious consultation of physicians on his state of health. Strength, sleep, appetite, enjoyment of life, had withered away, with a steady downward progress, of which he could not be unaware. The strain to which

every faculty had been subjected during his chase of Fortune, so triumphantly exciting him to bolder and bolder efforts, had begun to tell during the latter half of the seven married years.—It is all very well for the young to feel self-reliant—because they know that Youth can win friends, when such are wanted:—but here was a solitary man who had married in maturity, with some hope that his companion might prove one in whom he could repose entire confidence. —Time had not fulfilled this hope:—a void had opened, and suspicion had entered in; and, resolute man as he was, his consciousness of this,—never breathed in living ear, never absent from his thoughts during one solitary hour,—had grown into a canker, which, fixing on energies already impaired, threatened decay alarmingly.

Not a word of his purpose did he speak on the next morning of his departure: and took his usual cool leave of those he left behind him, with "Back on Thursday! Send the phaeton round to Old Caldermere —I want to say a word to Miss Scatters— and will walk."

It was a charming walk down the flower-garden on the slope, and across a lawn, and along a wild path through the fern among the trees glistening in the dewy beauty of early day. But of the beauty my Lord saw nothing; being deep in meditations, more engrossing than pleasant.

However early any one about Caldermere might rise, Miss Scatters was sure to be earlier. She had been known to surprise marauding children picking up sticks at four in the morning.—She was in the window, settled for the day, and knitting, at six—even in winter her fire was a-light, and her maids at work, by that hour.—The gamekeeper, compelled to sleep in the house, though by express charter relieved from obedience to her sharp and wakeful doings, only did so on the extremest compulsion: so intolerable were her habits to every person of Southern blood and breeding.

"Well, John Bower," so she hailed him in her loudest voice from her window—never having accustomed herself to use the great man's title—"and what brings ye aboot the place at sec a sensible time? I warrant my

lady is not oot of her bed, let alawn having breakfasted. And hoo are ye?"

"You are quite well, I see, and keeping your good north country hours as usual."

"Me, Ou ay!—I'm middling, as Margery danced, considering I count sixty-six. —You are gay yellow, John Bower, though, —but, nay, what? You neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep properly.—And what's all this grand news I hear about Kings and Queens coming to see Caldermere?"

"Why, cousin, I called on purpose, on my way to London, to tell you that" (naming the great personages) "will be with us on Thursday fortnight, the thirty-first: and Lady Caldermere and myself hope you will meet them.—You will come early, and stay the whole day. We must have all our relations with us."

"That will I, John Bower—it's hearty of you to trouble yourselves with an old cherry bogle like me.—I shall like to have a good look at them great folk, bravely. *Hech!* relations!—*Your* wife, John Bower" (so she always spoke of Sybil's predecessor), "would have been fleyted to the gates of

the grave at the bare thowts of heving to stand up in sec a company.—Not like my lady,—she'll look as much like a queen as any among 'em—though that poor weak Gatty *is* her cousin. She's naw but a cook, yon."

"Miss Whitelamb is an excellent and well-mannered person," said Lord Caldermere, who felt himself bound to make good his second marriage, in all points; especially with Miss Scatters,—who had been, from the first, independently resolute in criticising it directly and indirectly.—"Yes, Lady Caldermere *has* been used to high society, both here and in Germany—where the Courts are much more ceremonious than ours."

"Pity," said the pitiless Border-woman, a little piqued in her turn, "that she can't shaw off her Progeny—as that Gatty calls her youngest—for Justin he's not mich to figure among grit fawk, thaw he's a brave book-keeper over yon at Bower Mills!—But where's t' eldest? There was three brothers on 'em,—Mr. Ogg told Miss Ann."

"Not three sons of my wife's.—The one

you speak of was a natural son.—I knew of his death before we were married."

"Died be it then! Nay, what, I get queer notions into my head sometimes—and I thowt . . . . and here's your whisky. Why are ye off to London in sec a hurry? You look as if you wanted rest, and not a rattle in them railrawds. But there's naw guiding you men fawk. Good-bye then, John Bower." When the carriage had whirled him out of hearing—"Kings and Queens at Caldermere, to be sure!—but if Content's of the company, my name is not Abby Scatters. She's a deep one, my lady."

Was her soliloquy unconsciously echoed by the owner of that magnificent domain, as he passed rapidly through the park towards the station? Any one who could have seen through the walls of his escritoire that morning, would have seen that the seals of an envelope, which contained sundry unsigned letters received by Lord Caldermere at Baden-Baden, had been broken —an hour before his call at Old Caldermere

CHAPTER V.

A MORNING MASS.

The first weeks of married life did not run so easily along as to give time for the Prodigy, in the careless luxury of his happiness, to speculate as to what the world might be thinking or saying concerning himself and his bride.

It was the dull time of the year for music in Vienna. Every one—that is, every patron of art save such as keep alive the merry-go-rounds of the Würstl Prater, or those half-childish, half-coarse faëry theatres in which popular fun and satire used to find vent—was at his country-house, or at some bathing-place, whither musicians wishing to

make money must also needs repair. Our hero was among the number.

"I am stifling with this heat and dust, and this glare every time we cross the *glacis*," said he to his wife, the second week after their arrival in the capital. "We will be off the day after to-morrow;—I must be at work again, or my fingers will grow stiff. — How glad you will be of fresher air again!—They say that Kaisersbad is a paradise."

"Kaisersbad?—that is where the Russians are so fond of going,—is it not?—O yes, very glad!"—As he was not looking towards her, he did not see her face;—but she added directly—"Do let us stay a day or two longer, dear. I am so tired still. You know I am not used to travelling."

"My love, it is high time I was at work again.—If only we could live on air—*you* could not, for one—and even if I could, I could not be content without my music."

"We cannot live on air, I know, as well as you," replied Marie—"though I must live without . . . . . Ah! dearest, your music is so beautiful!—What a success it

will have! Look! what I have made for your new *rondo!*"—And she was up and floating round the room as she hummed the tune of Einstern's latest composition to a step of incomplete grace, in which there was the invention of genius. Her fatigue was, for the moment, forgotten.

What artist could resist a flattery so exquisite from so beautiful a creature?—"Well, dearest, I can refuse you nothing—you shall have your own way: we will stay two days longer, and I will score my new *rondo.*" They stayed accordingly.

The new *rondo*, however, was not absorbing enough to prevent Charles perceiving that his young wife was excited rather than rested by his fulfilment of her request.—Something might have been hovering in the air of Vienna to make her so singularly unquiet. She was surprised by him that very evening in tears.

"Weeping, my love! What has grieved you?"

"I don't know. . . . I cry very often when I am alone—and I cannot tell why.—I must have been thinking of poor uncle.

—What a death to die after such a wretched life! and yet he was a handsome man once! as handsome as you;—and my poor brother! he was not let to live, too!—O! . . . well, I will go to mass in the morning, and pray it away. . . . You know you promised that there should be a mass for poor uncle.—I am so fond of you, that I had forgotten it already. Well, never mind, now that I have you safe back again."

Ten minutes later, she was tying a gay gauze apron round her beautiful waist, and trying fancies with it. Her young husband watched her, silently.—"She will not be easy to guide," thought he. "Poor child! who has she had to guide her?"

The devotional humour of Marie, however, proved to be no whim or twilight fear, which passed away before the morning. She was up and dressed betimes;—and had nearly slipped away to early prayers unobserved; for Charles kept late hours in the morning. But the air of Vienna had made him wakeful. "Wait for me an instant; I will take you," said he. "You are too precious to be trusted in the street alone."

"What should harm me, now I belong to you?" was her answer, in a tone no less tender and true than his, and with a kiss. "As you please."

He took her to Saint Stephen's; saw her kneel down with great earnestness; and, like one on whom no beautiful thing was lost, studied for a moment the wondrous grace, repose, and self-forgetfulness of her kneeling attitude.

Then his thoughts would break away: he dropped into a reverie, forgetful of time and scene;—though place of worship more poetically striking than that dark cathedral, with its silver high altar, is hardly to be found in Christendom.—Einstern's reverie, however, was not one of thick-crowding musical fancies, such as often enfolded him.—It was rather the old aching yearning of one cast off by every being he loved, which returned on him.—There are other demons which can creep about in the church—to the racking of the hearts of the innocent who have entered there—as well as the one which terrified Faust's Margaret, by forbidding her to pray.—There is the

desolation of loneliness, as well as the agony of remorse!

The short service was over—Marie rose from her knees; and came down the aisle towards him among other women.

"Who was it you were speaking to?" said Charles, when they were outside the cathedral. "You were speaking to some one, were you not?"

"I, darling?—I was speaking to no one. —I have not had a creature to speak to save you and the waiters, and the shopman where we bought the Hungarian brooch, since we have been in this horrid place.—Shall I tell you why I petitioned to stay only over to-night?—I do so want to see 'La Tarentule.' —You won't prohibit my *seeing* dancing,— and there will be none at Kaisersbad.—They told me so much about 'La Tarentule' at Munich."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BRIDE'S FIRST VISITORS.

The treat of "La Tarentule" apparently depressed rather than amused the beautiful creature to whom it was offered. She followed the dancing with a frown; too intent on the stage, however, to be aware that to many she was an object of greater attraction than the voluptuous woman with a set smile, who was anxiously going through those evolutions—half zephyr, half peg-top, which are so wholly apart from wondrous reality and truth, though the world has agreed to admire them as the poetry of motion. The officers loungingly clustered at the door of the theatre to take a nearer observation of the beauty

as she came forth, and said injurious things behind their beards of Charles (who was personally unknown in Vienna), because his companion had let down a long veil. One of them, however, rushing forward in a more friendly voice, exclaimed, "Einstern, God bless me! is it you? I could not make out who it was in the box, or I would have come up."

"Ah, Count Foltz!" There was no help but to stop and hold out his hand.—"In a moment, Marie. I have called for a carriage."

The man who stopped their way was a splendid specimen of Austrian youth:—tall, robust, without coarseness of form, with a clear eye and a fresh complexion, a well-moulded forehead and well-chiselled lips: a man who might have been rated as faultlessly handsome, but for the almost flaxen paleness of his hair, and the very light blue of his eyes. No cornet or colonel had ever made more havoc in ladies' hearts than Count Foltz: and he took it as a matter of indifference, if not of course, as Charles knew. But his was the first known face seen

during the long period of nearly four weeks, and it was the face of a thoroughly kind-hearted fellow.—It would not do, moreover, for him pointedly to avoid any one he had known at Munich.—So, after a few common-places, Charles gave his address.—"Only for one day," he thought within himself, as he drew his wife away. It was her humour that night to be silent.

"So that was Count Foltz," said she, as they rode homewards. "They used to be always talking of him; but I never saw him before;" and she dropped again into her reverie:—only wakening from it to remind her husband that he was to go out the first thing in the morning to take places in the Post-carriage for Kaisersbad, and to see after that passport work.

"Don't be afraid, Marie," was his lively answer;—"I am more ready to get away from Vienna than you can be."

Little did he dream, when he left The Golden Sheaf the next morning, what had inspired his young wife with her new spirit of punctuality.—Her absence of all coquetry on the preceding evening; her utter absorp-

tion in the stage, or in himself, had struck him. He felt drawn nearer to her than he had yet been, and went on his way with something like lightness of heart.

With more, at least, than he left behind him. The most complete of the many changes which had passed over the young wife's face since their marriage, settled on it now. —It was aged for a moment by a sort of restless thoughtfulness.—She moved about the room—she opened the door—she went out on the staircase, and listened: then suddenly drew back, and calmed herself—like one whose suspense is relieved. "O!" said she, in a voice Charles had never heard, "if there is any one at the door, you may come in."

The visitor was a woful sight to see: the haggard wreck of a woman who had been a beauty, and been decked out as such,—who, in spite of the loss of beauty and friends, still clung to a love of finery without having kept her self-respect. Her eyes were sunk in leaden hollows: her cheek had a tanned and leathery look, save in one spot where it had been smeared with rouge: her teeth

were gone, which made her smile unpleasant. Some parade of hair-dressing had been attempted: but the curls were untidy, and the velvet across the forehead, with a large glittering brooch in the midst, was threadbare. Her gown, the train of which had been retrenched, had been in its time a rich silk. Her bonnet was dirty, but of apricot gauze; costly lace, in a state of utter ruin, was round her neck, and trimmed her coarse pocket-handkerchief, which was heavily scented. "You may come in, aunt," was Marie's sullen and haughty reception, "if you have anything to say to me. There is no one here."

"I may come in!" said the elder woman, feeling her way, as it were, towards her old authority, with a sort of experimental sulkiness.—"You are cordial, I must say, to one who was more than a mother to you; and who always loved you dearly!—What is there to be afraid of, that you would hardly speak to me in church yesterday? What is there to be ashamed of? Come—I am as good as any one you are with now, at all events. And when I have come to Vienna

as fast as I could, to make the best of this sad, sad business."

"What do you mean by making the best of it, aunt?—If you mean Uncle Semler . . . you cannot be called upon to pay any of his debts."

"Uncle Semler, indeed! A blessed deliverance, say I, before he murdered some of us outright, in one of his mad fits.—But I can't help looking at you," continued the woman, seating herself close to her niece.—"More beautiful than ever! I could not have believed that you could have improved so much in so short a time.—I never saw such a complexion—if it is quite your own."

"Quite, I assure you," was Marie's answer. She could not help smiling.

"And how you walk now!—But I declare, when I saw you come into the church yesterday, I did not know you—so graceful, so womanly! There is nothing like it on the stage. Ah! child! child! you will have much to answer for!"

"But you had to tell me something, aunt. —I cannot keep you long.—Charles will be

back directly.—If it is not about Uncle Semler—— ?"

"My dove, well it is that he is dead! We need live in fear of our lives no longer. He would never have rested from pursuing us so long as he was out of his grave, and there was a penny to be got from us. It is not of him that I wished to speak. Tell me, did you not get a note a few days ago from Count Radowitz?"

"I did; but don't mention names, aunt,—if he should be coming up-stairs!—Yes, and I destroyed it on the spot.—If my husband could have known of its coming . . . I must not hear of it any more now—I dare not!"

"Your husband!" screamed the elder woman. "What, then, are you married?"

The other fired up. "How else should I have been here with him?" was Marie's indignant reply. "I have not forgotten my brother. How can you dare to fancy anything else? You know I will not bear such talk!—I never would when I was in your power.—I made even the Farfalla let me alone as long as I could—and when

I could no longer keep her quiet, I managed by tricking and pretending . . . . I have nothing to reproach myself with. I can look my husband in the face, aunt."

"Ah! well," said the other, in a glozing tone. "It is a weight off my mind, if you are *really* married: poor as the prospect is. For they told me that he was only an artist, maintained by a Russian lady, and who had his bread to get.—Or can it be true, as he made your poor stupid brother believe, that he is an English Lord's son, with plenty of money to fling about him?"

"No, aunt, but he denies me nothing. He is the greatest musician in Europe, and will make a splendid fortune."

"God knows," was the pious answer. "Let us hope so.—But God knows, too, what you may not have flung away!—And so he has made you afraid of him already! —Why did you not answer the note from Radowitz?—He wants to see you.—Count Haugwitz wrote to him in such terms about you and La Farfalla!—They are at their wits' ends for some one that can *draw*.—The Rosenthal last night (I saw you in the

theatre), why, what is she? Thirty-five, if she is a day: and the Prince pays that she may not be hissed—but that won't keep a theatre open. Yet she is the best they have. Why, see the other creatures,—that Aurelie, with shoulder-blades one could cut meat with!—what a pass they have come to, you may think, when that Julia Besigheim—you recollect Julia, she was just leaving La Farfalla's when we got there——"

"O, aunt, yes; and tell me about Julia."

"A mere ape, as compared with you.—Why, she is ewe-necked, and cannot throw her head back;—and yet, look! they have also lately sent for her to London, and she has gone off with two carriages. Now is your time, Radowitz says.—He had better then, write, or come himself, to your husband then, I suppose? But I do not know what Radowitz will offer now.—There is a prejudice—I don't know why—but there is a prejudice against married women."

For Heaven's sake, don't let any one come here!—Radowitz, nor any one else. It would be of no use, even if I were ready.—Charles is worse than poor Jacob! He

would not hear of such a thing.—There would be a quarrel.—I am not to dance. He will not let me!"

"Not let you dance? Is the man in his right senses? Becker was melancholy mad, I know. It runs in the blood.—But to think of your having married such another! Not let you dance!—He must be mad too, or joking! What else could he marry you for, but to make sure of the money?"

"Hold your tongue, aunt!" cried Marie, starting up violently. "He is not like you, or any of your people! He has high notions, and it is only because he is too proud of me, and loves me too dearly, that he wants to make a treasure of me. As for money, there is not a thing I have a fancy for which he will not give me!"

"O, then, I may write to *you*, darling, if you have got such a disguised Prince for your husband! Heaven knows, I sometimes sit all the day long, contriving and wondering where my next gown is to come from! You are not going to turn ungrateful to your poor old aunt?"

"No—no—but don't write to me! He is set against you! He will be coming home directly—and must not see you.—I told you so yesterday, in the church."

"What can have set him against me? What harm should I do him, my dear, or you either?" replied the odious woman in her most sugared voice.

"He must not see you, I tell you!—You must go,—or else there will be never any chance . . . You must tell Radowitz that it's of no use—that he must not come near me—that I am not going to dance."

"Ey . . . ey . . . ey . . . I see," said the aunt, her lynx eyes twinkling with cunning. "He's jealous of you just now, my pet—and no wonder, lovelier than ever as you are.—Don't you be jealous of him. Take an old woman's advice, and take my word that such a handsome fellow as he is (all the women in the theatre were noticing him) will have something else to do, by-and-by, than to watch you; and then . . ."

"Go—go! . . . I hear his voice on the stairs."

"He has got four feet, then.—Well!

well! I am going!—When shall I see you again? . . ."

"You must not come again. We are going to Kaisersbad to-morrow."

"Well, then, let me tell Radowitz, at least, that you will write to him if you should change your mind. You know his address? . . . Well, good-bye, then, and God bless you, my sweet child."—And with this departing speech, meant to be heard, Aunt Claussen had prudence enough to sidle out of the room, just when Charles was entering. He eyed her keenly as she passed, as one whom he had seen before: but, for the moment, his attention was diverted by other things.

"Foltz," said he to his companion, "let me present you to my wife, Madame Einstern."

A royal bride could not have received an ambassador with more composed dignity than Becker's sister had at her instant command.—Even her husband was surprised, as it were, by a new talent in her: while the visitor, by no means generally bashful, was, for a moment, dumbfoundered.—He

had come in cheerily, with a cigar in his mouth, to look at "Einstern's girl"—but the somewhat easy compliment he had got ready (having not a very fluent invention) would by no means befit the occasion. "She had the airs of an Archduchess," was his account of her to his comrades, whom he had engaged to accompany him on a second visit.—And the most experienced of Archduchesses, the one most hackneyed in precedences and representations, could not have better entertained a visitor totally indifferent to her, with a string of pretty, proud, insipid questions about Kaisersbad, than she did.—While her husband was by (a brilliant suggestion, which accounted for some of her grandeur to the vanity of the lady-killer), such a conversation could not go to any very great length: and Count Foltz accordingly took leave—the audience being over—at the end of ten minutes.—"She is a pearl you have married, Einstern," said he, while he lit his cigar outside the door.—"Lucky, lucky fellow!"—And he strode home to his lodgings, smoking, and sighing, and thinking (for him) deeply.

"Marie," said her husband, as he re-entered, "you have had somebody with you. Who was that woman?"

The bride was as yet not very adroit in carrying out the little concealments which her wretched education had made habitual to her. "Don't be angry, Charles, with me! —I did not want you to meet her.—I did not want you to be troubled with her! I hoped she would be gone before you came in.—Indeed, I sent her away!—and it was Aunt Claussen."

"Was she not in the church yesterday morning? I saw her there."

Marie stuck heroically to her yesterday's falsehood. "If she was, I did not see her. How she searched us out, I cannot imagine. —I had not the least idea she was in Vienna" —which last assertion was true.

"How dared she search you out, after having served you as she did—after having left you in the hands of that woman? What was her errand here?—Marie, you must hold no intercourse with her.—It has been her choice to break it off, and she must abide by it."

"Ah! yes! could you imagine I wish it, now I have *you?*—It was merely that the news of poor Uncle Semler's death had reached her—and she wanted to know all the truth about it, and whether he had left her any money. She will not come again: she knows that we are going away in two days.—I told her that we were going to Kaisersbad."

"You should not have told her.—She will not follow us there, I hope. Marie, if she writes to you, I have told you that I will not have you answer her letters. You are rid of the old bad times, now and for ever."

"Yes . . . for ever!" was the ready answer, with an embrace.—"If you knew how it made me think of them to see her!—She was always a miser with her money—she never made me any presents.—How strange it is to be married, and to have no relations to give one presents!"

"What matter, love?—There is one for you, in my *rondo:* and another in my first Kaisersbad concert."

She was dancing again round the room

like a sylph—doubtless in the child-like expectation of the first concert.—"And let it be a surprise, darling; I delight in surprises.—Ah! what a one was that when you appeared at La Farfalla's with those flowers! Some of them are not quite withered yet.—I will have them set in a locket, with your hair in it, and diamonds round it, so soon as we can afford it. Charles," continued she, winding herself round him, and smiling that delicious and irresistible smile of hers, "I hope there are no beautiful great ladies at Kaisersbad. I shall be fearfully jealous of you—and I shall always sit next to the piano, shall not I?—but I have no proper dress. Ah! well, we will get one there!—a pale sea-green—I look best in pale sea-green!"

He asked her, when he had disengaged himself from her arms, whether all her preparations for the journey were finished.

"Not yet," was the reply; "I would have kept Aunt Claussen, and made her pack for me, but she would have seen my shawls: and then she would have become troublesome. She used to ask people for dresses

and bonnets, darling. Even Jacob, poor Jacob, she wrote to once when she wanted a squirrel muff—as if Jacob ever sent one anything but a book now and then, which I used to pretend to read. Reading is so wearisome! Don't despise me, darling! I was not born to be a scholar—but . . ."

He stopped her mouth with a kiss.—Who knows whether, if he had not done so, something more of the truth might not have come out, and some of the consequences of Aunt Claussen's distasteful visit been averted?

CHAPTER VII.

COMPANY AT KAISERSBAD.

It was of no use for Charles to palter with himself.—Let him laugh it off as he could, when he was gay—let him cry it off as he must, when he was weary—the conviction came down upon him with the dead weight of a torrent of desolation;—the truth was traced—with as clear and burning characters as though it had been traced in fire—on the forehead of his beautiful wife, whenever it met him, whether she was sprightly or melancholy—HE COULD NOT LOVE HER! however long, long might be the life they might be doomed to pass together.

Every week — every day — every hour,

made it only more and more evident that they had not an opinion—not a pursuit—hardly a sense, in common:—and only one affection.—Whether by birth, or by training, it mattered not—Marie was now naturally artificial. Her very beauty—dazzling in its grace of form and intensity of colour, had something theatrical in it. It was the beauty of Venus in her shell—of Sappho on her rock—of Juno in her car of triumph. Her eyes, with all their glorious light, never seemed to look into any one heart, but around them—to every one in the wide world—for suffrage and triumph. They melted only when Charles was alone with her: for the strongest affection which she had ever known or knew afterwards was her passion for him.

She would neither learn nor listen: nor appeared to comprehend what work had to be done, before she could take her place in the home-world of women. She seemed to hold a book in a sort of superstitious terror,—unless it was one of those bloody and grim German romances, of spectres and trap-doors, and tyrants and love-lorn

countesses, which, even in Vienna, have now sunk beneath the favour of the servants' offices.—In vain did Charles try to find some subject, some preference, which might tempt an intellect so utterly dormant to awaken.—Poetry, or drama, or history; she would have none of them.—She cared nothing for his art, save insomuch as she could dance to music.—She could not precisely be called silly; for every now and then, a curious mother-wit flashed out, which might have belonged to a bright nature; but a creature more uncultivated, and more perversely opposed to all cultivation, has been rarely seen. At first, when urged to occupy herself with something besides winding a scarf round her, or leaning over a balcony, or trying effects with roses and wreaths of leaves among her hair —she would laugh and say, "Never mind, dearest, you must take me as I am! We shall do perfectly well without it all."—As the weeks went on, her laugh grew fainter, or more forced—and her husband's suggestions fewer in number, and less earnest. —One day he caught himself thinking,

and the thought marked the day in his mind: "How poor Becker would have been disappointed! It may have been as well that he is gone."

He was by this time beginning to slacken in speaking of her brother's wishes and hopes in regard to her.—His penetration,—which, when his passions were not concerned in its keenness, amounted to almost a misfortune,—had led him to fathom the shallowness of her love, as an influence, and not a mere affair of sentiments and words. It is marvellous to see how unture women can be to themselves, in first imagining feelings which they really do not feel;—and then doing battle for the same, as for realities. Charles now began to perceive that Marie's letters to her brother had partaken of this unreality;—and that they had contained something of self-assertion, in the only form which was possible to one obviously so self-willed—something of her protest against authority—and this not only the authority of her Aunt Claussen, but that of such genuine love as will cleave rocks and will ford rivers, and will only die with its own life,—since it will

burn to the last, like a faint taper-flame, beside the grave where the loved one is laid.—Such love Charles felt he could feel.—And could it be true, that whenever—it was but too seldom—he was disposed to question any luxury or indulgence which she longed for, she would then the most tenderly recur to the brother who was gone—would *then* only volunteer to talk and to ask questions about that poor dear Jacob, who had doted on her?

He questioned her fancies too seldom, either for her growth in self-restraint, or for his means to gratify them.—He must make her happy, so far as he could—thus ran his thoughts—make her happy in her own way.—Then how should he in fairness check her, who himself had been born with an instinct for everything that was gorgeous and prodigal?—and who had means, he proudly felt, within his own grasp, for gratifying her every wish as it rose?—There was, after all, a pleasure and a glory in thinking that his wife could go abroad among other women, as brave and as gay as if she had been dowered from Caldermere.

It was a tribute to his own success and a wilder and more bounteous success, than his at Kaisersbad no artist could dream of.—The place was then the resort of some of the richest Princes and commoners in Europe.—The Arms of Prague was almost entirely panelled from roof to floor with hatchments of royal guests who had sojourned there. A musical set of grandees happened to be assembled that year:—and public gambling is not permitted there. Dancing and music, then, are the two main resources of the place; its environs possessing no extraordinary attraction. But it was not the Prodigy's music alone which made him precious as an excitement at Kaisersbad: it was the history of his severance from his great Russian patrons, which gave a crowning charm and provocation to his rare genius and personal beauty. — Then it rendered matters more piquant, that his beauty was now the lawful property of another woman.—Nor was this all.—Einstern's wife would, of herself, have been sufficient to draw attention to any husband;—so remarkable was her personal appear-

ance, so singular in the mixture of impenetrability to the many, and passion for only one person, displayed by her behaviour and her proceedings.—She shared the sovereignty of Kaisersbad, that season, with her husband; —to the deposition of the recognised Queen of the Waters, the imperious Countess Schilkenstein, the worthy daughter of that less beauteous virago who (as scandalous continental history well knows) brained our Iron Duke, when on conquest bent, with her parasol.—Not only were all the Schilkenstein's vassals (Count Foltz among the number) lukewarm in attendance at her footstool whenever the plebeian beauty appeared,—but her attempts to make up for their defection were coolly traversed by Madame Einstern. Marie had no fear of her husband's head being turned by the great lady's advances and flatteries.—She had sense enough to divine that these were already as powerless as a charm over one prematurely old in the experiences of vanity. But she did not choose that they should be exhibited in public. Closest to the pianoforte, whenever Charles was to play, she would always sit;—and

would have the best chair, no matter what woman might be there before her. "This is my place," she would generally say. On finding the Schilkenstein in possession one evening, she varied the *formula:* "I must ask you to get up, and give me my place, madam."—It was of no use to look indignant.—The great lady was absolutely cowed by the quiet air and tone of command with which the Beauty asserted her claim—got up as requested; and Madame Einstern sat down as a matter of course; and arranged the flowers in her *bouquet.*

But the most arrogant and triumphant of beauties may have to confront Nemesis when she least expects it. At that concert the crevice opened—though but a hair's breadth—which was to spread into a chasm dangerous to the married happiness of Becker's sister.

It was a farewell concert; for the season was approaching its close,—with tickets double the usual price, and (what is strange in Germany) a larger audience than ever. The Prodigy's reputation was spreading wider and wider every day.

Through the windows, so long as daylight lasted, might be seen crowded faces of those unable to pay, yet hungering for music, who had clambered up to listen.—One of these faces, irregular and unhealthy, but with a pair of eyes which told their owner's story, was steadied upon the handle of a crutch. Poor boy! it must have been hard for him to get a hearing of that concert.—The concert-giver caught the face and the crutch, and understood the wistful meaning of those great eyes.

"Foltz," said he, turning on his chair ere he began—(Count Foltz was seldom far from the Einsterns)—"look at yonder lame boy in the window; see! in the shabby blue cap.—Will you have him brought in, like a good fellow, and put in a chair—and give him *this?*"—the gift was a small piece of gold.

The tall Austrian Count, who really was a good fellow, made way through the crowd, and did as he was told,—not without some difficulty in persuading the humble, nervous creature that no harm was meant

him, and that he had committed no misdemeanor.

Not until he was placed would Charles begin.—Something of his old school-day feeling (ah! how far away it seemed already) may have been recalled by this appeal to his tender-heartedness. As one of his worshippers expressed it (to the infinite offence of Madame Schilkenstein), "his face was its best,"—and two young English gentlemen of high degree, without a note of music in their souls, who happened to be passing through Kaisersbad—and had straggled in for want of something better to do, amused themselves during the whole evening by betting with each other whether or not "that pianoforte fellow rouged."

Marie had seen her husband whisper Count Foltz, and had seen the gold piece; and had seen the pallid, threadbare boy and his crutches accommodated. She laid away carefully in her memory every slightest transaction of her husband's.—Ere the evening was over, however, she had to lay away something which, to her, was no light matter.

At the end of the second act, in the midst of the confusion of the assembly breaking up—through the crowd of men pushing back their chairs, and great ladies (the Schilkenstein excepted) who thronged up to the piano to congratulate the player, while his seated wife looked on,—there advanced; plunging through the multitude, and warm, among other causes of warmth, with the zeal of begging pardon from more than she discomfited by her plungings—a noticeable young lady.—This was none other than the belle of the music-school of other days—the true-souled Miss Minna Twiese.

That hearty creature, who grew more rosy and more round every month (though her experience of crossed loves was large), had on that evening done marvellous things to be equal to the occasion. Her head was adorned with acorns, feathers, gold lace, ivy-leaves, cherries, and a streamer of ribbons. Her gown was alive with knots, tassels, and fringes, and many vegetable productions. Her bracelets were beyond count, as befitted a rich Burgomaster's daughter — and one was overburdened with keepsakes. Her fan

was only finer than her bag, and her bag was only gaudier than her nosegay. But her face was more resplendent than her glorious apparel — streaming over with breathless enthusiasm and good humour, and with a look intended to recal other days—as she stood staring and smiling and panting — and impatiently smelling at her flowers—till she could claim her old acquaintance. Close before Marie she pressed so ponderously as nearly to upset the chair and the lady in it;—then, turning in haste to apologise, "Ach! pray!" said she, "excuse me.—But this is heavenly!—Have I not the great pleasure of speaking to Charles's beautiful wife?"

"Charles?—I am Madame Einstern."

"Ach! then, to you I can yield him—I will not say without regret, for I am a straightforward girl,—but I *can* yield him! And yet I had his last kiss before he left college,—and I have the gloves he played in.—See! . . ."—and she fished out from her bosom a treasure as large as a small tobacco-box, with a glass front.—"There are some pieces here; the rest I treasure at home.—

Not a scrap will I give away.—O, dear Madame Einstern, I hope you will let me love you too, and not be jealous. I have forgiven you."

"Forgiven me!" was the reply, uttered with no echoing warmth of voice.

"Ach! yes; and when I think that but for that Becker he would have stayed in the Conservatorium till Easter, and then, who knows? . . . Come, I will sit down close to you—and hide myself;—and then, when he turns, he will not see me for a moment—and then be so surprised!—He used to call me his pigeon, because I was round;—and did he ever tell you how he danced with me at the Shooting-Festival ball, and how to teaze him I went in a wreath of pigeons' feathers, and with a wing on each shoulder?"

"They must have been very intimate," thought the young wife—looking towards the Schilkenstein no more.—"Miss Twiese," she said, "you are sitting on my gown."

"Ach! pray! I would sit at your feet! I could kiss the hem of your garment, I am so happy to be with you both!—When I

heard that Charles was here giving concerts — 'Father,' I said, 'I *will* go to Kaisersbad and surprise him.'—Father was anything but willing—because . . . and then he wanted to finish his cure at Clarchenhainchen.—But it was of no use—I told him I would put on a postilion's dress, as Bettina did when she went to visit Goethe—and come by myself, if he would not;—and now, here he is laid up with his gout again, and obliged to miss this beautiful music—and so I came to the concert alone.—Nobody knows me, so what does it matter?—and the hairdresser saw me safe to the door.—Ach! thank Heaven! those ladies have had enough, at last;—though they look as if they could eat him. —Now, Charles, turn and see whom you have got to see—an old friend, with the old true heart!"

Charles did turn, a little impatiently, being somewhat tired of incense and compliments, and invitations to supper—and it did him good to be surprised by that flaring buxom creature,—admiring him so openly and vehemently, as not to care who saw or heard, or what any one might say.

"My dear Minna," said he, grasping her hand eagerly, "how glad it makes me to meet you here!—how it brings back old happy days!—I am married, Minna, and this is my wife."

"Ach! yes—I know; we have introduced ourselves, and are the best friends: and I have forgiven her for carrying you off.—Nay, you know we all liked you, and you used to swear you would never marry at all—since you could not marry us all!"

"Is it not late, Charles?" said the young wife, rising and shawling herself with a languid grace, not lost on Count Foltz, who was hovering near.—"Miss Twiese is here alone."

"O, I shall take care of Minna. She shall come and sup with us.—And how is every one? How is good Papa Orelius?—Has his wife come to the end of her stock of yellow curl-papers yet?"

Before Minna could answer, she explained that, though she was alone, her father was at The Unicorn, in great pain with his foot. Perhaps they would escort her so far, as she was strange to Kaisersbad.

Madame Einstern could not go—she had a headache. How bitterly did she repent her subterfuge, when Charles said, as if he had been forty years married (but he was precocious in everything), "Minna must not go by herself;—and I must say a word of greeting to good Mr. Twiese, though I did torment him many a time.—Foltz, my dear fellow, just see my wife to our door, will you?"

The dear fellow was only too happy. Here was an event to be discussed over his cigar to his comrades. The beautiful Madame Einstern!—to whom no one hardly dare offer a compliment.—He must make himself as bewitching as he could, and the way to her hotel as long as possible. She might—she must surely ask him in!

"Is The Unicorn far?" asked Marie, anything rather than charmed with this arrangement.

"Quite at the other end of the Long Street—close to the Barrier," was the comfortable answer of the young Austrian, hardly able to dissemble his extreme satisfaction. "This is our way."

CHAPTER VIII.

TEMPTERS, MALE AND FEMALE.

COUNT FOLTZ was a vain man,—and not a wise man,—and not a man whose court and camp life had been orderly; a conqueror, it was reputed, whose victories had cost him little trouble.—Every one knew, or professed to know, what Einstern's beautiful wife had been—a *ballet*-pupil spirited away from her school—and with none of those wonderful stories of ancestry, impoverished or opposing relations, or some simple affection early blighted, by which theatrical candidates can be made interesting.—And yet, now that the lady was fairly committed to his charge,—and though he knew well how

to find the longest way home for her,—the complacent and fluent victor felt himself distanced,—at fault, poorer in the resource of compliment than he had ever known himself to be; during all his life's experience.

His charge was totally indifferent to him —because her mind was fiercely busy over another engrossing subject. He felt—though not the most observant of men—that no word he had to say reached her: that "Yes" and "No" answered him, with a most royal and random disregard of his delightful compliments,—and not because they threw her fluttering heart into any confusion. A figure of ice might have made just the same sort of wrong answers in the wrong places.

Of course the concert was to be the starting-point—but the "dear fellow who had played so magnificently" must only be touched on for appearance' sake.—Madame Einstern did not seem moved by the praise. The skirmisher then moved lightly on to Madame Schilkenstein, her insolences, and the admirable manner in which these had been rebuked that evening.—This, too, was

treated as a matter of course: to the increase of his wonderment. That leader of fashion—whose singular and new devotion to pianoforte music had of late been matter for universal remark—set coolly aside, as some one to be neither regarded nor feared! —Inconceivable!—The Count then turned in his mind the beauties of Nature in the neighbourhood of Kaisersbad: but he was sensible that he had but a small assortment of wares from that source to exhibit—and when he had done his best to speak of the Falcon's Height, and the Hunting Tower on the top of it, and Marie had pertinently replied, "Not properly!" he felt that he was worsted—and must beat a retreat towards something more practicable.

"Where do you intend to winter, madame?" was the next attack—direct enough, but common-place.

"No! . . . I beg your pardon, I was not attending. Where we shall be in the winter? At Dresden, Charles thinks."

Count Foltz thought of some one else who might be at Dresden during the winter: but was too subtle to name him.

"Ah! a charming place is Dresden, though it is rather dull when there is no amusement going on. The theatre is so classical, you know, madame—is the theatre at Dresden.—Pray take my arm, the pavement is so bad.—No?—And all the actresses are so ugly! Classical actresses are always ugly.—I like the Berlin theatre far better. Have you ever been there? Such ballets! There's a little girl at Berlin just now, fresh from Munich, who is turning everybody's head by her dancing."

Marie seemed to have heard this:—at all events, her question, though listless, was coherent. "What is her name?"

"Bretti—Baretti, that's it:—but it is not her real name. She is a Bohemian from Pilsen.—You *will* stumble, madame, and sprain your foot!—Pray allow me!"

"No, thank you? Did I ever hear of her before?—I did not stumble, thank you."—Marie had done so, though—and she had heard the name before.

"No one ever heard of her before:—and yet they had the horses out of her carriage the fourth night she danced as Diana.

—She is about your height, madame—and when I saw you, I felt at once she had reminded me of you.—There's an air somehow—though, of course, there's no possible comparison. . . . . The other women are wild against her—and swear she squints with the left eye . . . . but that is because she has diamonds and sapphires already.—Poor things! they must be spiteful, and pull her to pieces. . . . . Will you not be hurried with walking so fast?"

"No, no—I want to get home . . . . I want to get . . . ." but even a novice as Marie was, she did not complete the sentence, and say, "get rid of you."—"What?" she began instead—and then stopped. . . . "You know my Charles very well.—You did not, did you, know him well before we were married?"

"Well, no, madam, not much. I never wish to know unhappy people."

"Unhappy?" was the answer, and she turned quickly—"how unhappy?"

"How could he be otherwise—till" (with a well executed sigh) "he had found you?—Ah! there is an unhappiness one cannot

explain, which is worse than any real sorrow."

"With all my heart," was the Beauty's unsatisfactory reply.—"Here I am at home, Count Foltz—thank you.—Good night!" And she was up the stair and out of sight,—leaving the most renowned lady-killer in Gratz to reflect how little she had given him to tell over his cigar.

"Patience," muttered he, "till another time.—But she is wonderfully icy, for so young and pretty a creature, and with that figure that begs to be embraced. . . . . Patience,—there may be fire under the ice."

Yes: fire there was—but not at his service.—Marie was glad to be alone for a moment or two,—no matter if her Charles had been attending on a charmer more fatal than the bold Minna Twiese.—"Beretti!" cried she, flinging herself down before a glass, as she raised her bouquet in both hands, and, tearing it to pieces, showered the flowers down on her head with a brilliant smile, openly addressed to her own image.—"Beretti such a triumph!—that little, swarthy girl with a long neck, whom the Farfalla never

could bear!—Beretti, indeed, compared with me!—I have half a mind! Yes—I *will*"—and she flew to an escritoire, wrote a note of only three lines to some one at Vienna—sealed, directed it, and hid it in her bosom.—"Lie there," said she, laying her taper hand lightly on the hiding-place. —"Who knows if I ever send thee?—I will not, at least, till we get to Dresden—and then only if . . . ."

How long was the pause she knew not, ere she started and touched the place where the note lay, like one who felt she had a talisman of sure defence.—Hours, she thought hours longer than days and nights had passed: and still she was alone, with strange suspicions and thoughts, that would not show themselves openly—and with the note in her bosom, which she had no idea of really despatching. At last her husband came back.

In an instant she was on her knees before him, looking up into his face. "Ah! you truant! ah! you traitor! to have left me so long—and for such a creature!—I would rather die than grow as fat and as hideous as that girl. She told me you had

danced with her.—Why, *she* can never have danced!—And she told me you had kissed her! You never did! I will not bear to hear you say that you ever kissed her!"

"Well, poor Minna is a kind girl, though she does make too much noise. Has the Schilkenstein's servant not been yet?"

"I will not be put off in that way. What did she say to you? What did you say to her?"

"Not much, Marie. There was no time."

"Time? and it is three o'clock in the morning!"

"Not one o'clock, my love!" and he drew her jewelled watch from her bosom, little guessing what lay in its neighbourhood, and dangled it before her eyes.—"No, the old Burgomaster would hardly let me speak a word to Minna: he had so much news to tell me."

"Time was" (the Prodigy's mind was as full of its own thoughts as his wife's) "when the best word the old Burgomaster had in store for me, was something sour and disagreeable. But I have become famous, forsooth, and so all is forgotten and forgiven,

and they hope I do not remember the old place unkindly—and if any misunderstanding there was, it surely was the fault of Rector Orelius, who filled them with false ideas. Shame on the sycophants!—Yes, do you know they have absolutely leagued against the only honest man among them, who stood my friend there—and they have jangled and gossiped about the matter (a set of wretched, scandalous old coffee-wives!) till they have absolutely persuaded themselves that he, not I, was in fault, and has brought shame on the school by his mismanagement. —Twiese, who has not courage enough to make head against them, says that it is probable Orelius will have to resign his church, —the dear old man!—All his lodgers have left him. I wish I could send him some money; but I must wait awhile.—We have been spending so much here!—It is too bad that he should come to misfortune for my sake." And Charles leaned his head on his clasped hands, despondently.

"You set great store by these people, I see," said the young wife, who had never before seen, and could not understand, re-

action of spirits after excitement. His silence made her more than ever suspicious and watchful. "What is that handkerchief?" she exclaimed suddenly, searching him keenly with her eyes. "You did not take that handkerchief out with you."

"I cannot give it you," was his answer, as he roused himself.—"Look at the pains poor Minna has taken to mark it for me:—to mark it with her own hair."

She darted upon him like a serpent.—"Let me have it," cried she—"I will have it!"—and raising it above her head in her two hands, as she had done the flowers but an hour before, ere he could say a word she had torn it into shreds, and trampled them under her feet.

"There, Charles! and there! and it shall be there, and there, and there again! if any of your old lovers dare to work handkerchiefs for my darling, and to tell me that she has tasted your last kiss!—If you will have your own way with me—if you will keep me all to yourself—why then, take the consequences—I'll have no Minnas working handkerchiefs for my Charles!"

No words can describe the mocking, sinister, and yet alluring smile with which she eyed him as she stood before him.—No bystander could have readily told how much of the scene was earnest, how much jest.—But the arrow shot past him—because he had never been in love with her. He only said, and with a deep sigh, "How are we to get on, Marie, if these are to be your wild ways?—What I have heard to-night has made me very sad. I cannot laugh with you—and, for the sake of past days, I cannot be angry with you.—You must," he went on, trying to assume a livelier tone, "work me handkerchiefs yourself, if you will let me wear none of other women's working.—I cannot but think of poor kind Orelius!—And for my sake, too!"

It amazed as much as it hurt Marie that she had not made him angry—it put the two farther apart than a quarrel would have done. But his mind was too full of other things to dwell on the freak, save as a piece of childish mischief. Could she attract him to her neither by her grace nor by her jealousy?—Ah, she little knew how

weak had grown already the charm which had attracted him to her, — her being Becker's sister.—Even that fierce and almost insane outbreak did not add a weight to the cloud on him.—He was thinking of that former triumph, after which Death had claimed him.—He was seeing that haggard, poverty-stricken room,—that corpse which lay, dull and deaf and white, on the bed.—He was running over all which had passed, as a consequence of that triumph and that catastrophe:—and never had he felt the ache of heart, the deep yearning, for all that would come no more, for all which the Fates seemed to deny him—so bitterly at that moment.

He forced himself to speak lightly. "Did you find Count Foltz amusing? I hope he took proper care of you?"

"O, perfectly, and he told me something. . . ." She checked herself, and laid her hand on her bosom.

"What was it, Marie, he told you?"

"About the Countess Schilkenstein's little dog," said she, recovering herself to a subterfuge, — now thoroughly resolved, since

Charles had his secret, that she would not confide to him hers which she had hidden in her bosom.—"I will have a little dog too."

Her frivolous tone jarred on every nerve, but he forced himself (ah! why will husbands and wives ever masquerade with one another?) to answer in a tone corresponding with her own.—"Be thankful that you have a watch-dog, darling, to take proper care of you—though he is tired to-night, and wants his supper."

"He would not have been tired if he had supped at The Unicorn," thought Marie, as she watched him eat his meal in silence. Then she suddenly got up, and embracing him passionately: "Have you forgiven me, Charles, for tearing the handkerchief? Miss Minna has forgiven me long ago, she says, for taking you from her."

"I had forgotten it, dear," said he, kissing her calmly.—"Come; it is late."

It was well that she did not see the shadow on his face when she had passed through the door;—and an hour later, when he laid

down on his pillow. She had been, then, for some time asleep.

It was long ere his eyes closed; he knew not how much longer—save by its being the grey of early morning—before he was awaked suddenly—by a voice, almost an outcry.

She was sitting up in bed, with her long hair loose over her shoulders, her eyes dilated (he fancied he could see them glitter), and every fibre trembling, with a great fear.—"O, where am I? Hold me fast! Wake! wake! Why will you not wake?—He has been here!"

"Darling, it is I! . . . . I am awake! Who has been here? What has terrified you so?"

"He was yonder! just yonder! at the foot of my bed . . . . looking as wild and furious as he used to do—and he threatened to strangle me if I did not get all your money from you, and come away with him: —and he said that, to make matters sure, he would quiet you first.—I saw his knife! . . . And then, somehow, it was both he and

Jacob at once: and he looked at me so, that I dared not cry out, and he came close—close up to me. . . . ." And again Marie began trembling so violently, that her husband could hardly hold her in his arms.

"It is only a dream!—it is only a bad dream!" said Charles, as he soothed her. "We have both been thinking too much of old times.—We must think of them as little as we can help!—I am with you! There is nobody—nothing that can harm you! Try to compose yourself, and to sleep again!"

"O, do not let me go to sleep! They will come back again! and he will call me those dreadful names again; and he will hurt me. He always threatened to hurt me! Promise me not to let me go to sleep!"

"It will be day soon, darling! It is growing brighter already—and then you will forget it all!—Lay your head on my shoulder; and try to sleep.—I promise you I will wake you, if you are in the least disturbed!—I promise you to keep awake myself!"

It was no easy matter to soothe her. She would have him get up, and search every

corner of the room, to be quite sure that nothing was lurking there to terrify her :—and when this was done, he had long and patiently to bathe her throbbing temples with water, ere her agitation subsided, and her beautiful head did fall helplessly on his shoulder.—But Charles kept his promise, and closed his eyes no more—and was believed, when after three hours she wakened, looking pale and tired, it is true, but quite calm, and having, it seemed to him, forgotten the ugly dream.—Had she been partly acting, or really so terrified as she had seemed? He could not be sure :—and he only partially heard her say to herself: "I will wait, at least,—I will not put my letter in the post to-day;" and then half aloud, "I will go to prayers."

He thought of her prayer-going at Vienna; and of the horrible aunt on the stairs. How could he know that *this* devotional movement was merely (as it was) a case of pure superstition — and not one in which some new artifice was mixed up?

This time, at all events, Charles did not accompany his wife to prayers—this time,

too, she lingered at the door ere she went —for she hoped he would attend her, being only urged to church by superstitious uneasiness. But his heart was with other people.—He was thinking wistfully of his school-days and of Doctor Orelius, and how to help that good man,—so wistfully, that he did not hear a feeble tap at the door, nor a second and louder one.—Of the third he was aware.—"Who is it?" he said, impatiently. "Come in."

CHAPTER IX.

NEW TOYS AND TRIALS.

There came feebly in—not merely because the step faltered, but because the heart of him who entered was full of timid uncertainty—the one among his last evening's audience who had been the most rapt, the most moved :—that poor weakly boy, with those wonderful, sad eyes, which had arrested Einstern's attention. Now, however, the boy's cheeks were not pale, but flushed with an enthusiasm there was no mistaking, as he came forward, with his poor cap in his hand, saying clearly, though in a low voice, and trembling in every fibre as he said it, with the face of one who looks up to a

superior being: "Dear and honoured sir,—forgive me! I could not go away without thanking you for your noble bounty to me. Ah! that was music! I shall be better for it all my life!"

"Why, my boy, is that you?" said Charles, rousing himself.—"Did they get you a good place? I did not see.—And so you like pianoforte playing?"

"Like!—*such* playing! . . . . Sir, I have saved for months, and come twelve miles to hear you"—the miles were German miles—"and have walked part of the way."

"Walked!"—and the Prodigy glanced at the boy's crutch.

"I am not lame, sir . . . . only it is I have little strength."

"Where do you come from?—Are you a musician too?"—and a tender hand was laid on the poor lad's shoulder.—"Come, sit down: tell me about yourself. Did you come alone?"

"Yes, honoured sir,—I have no parents."—The simple words went home to the heart of the listener.—"I am with the organist at

Rittersweerda, and wait on him :—but I have not strength in my feet enough to play on the organ—and so I copy music:—but I had heard of you while I was blowing the bellows, from some great ladies and gentlemen who came to hear him play."

"And yet you have strength to blow the bellows?"

"One must live, honoured sir,—and he says I am of little other use to him:—and so, as I can now go back by the Post-waggon in the night, thanks to you,—I could not go without being bold enough to come and express my gratitude. Ah! sir, if I could only do anything for you in return;" and the large eyes glistened as the boy spoke.

"Do anything for me?" said the Prodigy, lightly; "why, what could you do, besides copying music? Can you write and read?"

"Here is my day-book, honoured sir!—I am greedy enough to entreat you to write your name in it."

Charles took the miserable little memorandum-book.—It was kept with exquisite neatness.—"And you say you have no

parents," he said, with many, many thoughts busy at his heart, while he seemed to be carelessly turning over the leaves.

"None, sir. My mother died in spring—she had been dead to me for many years—for she was bedridden with palsy."

"Who takes care of you, then, now?"

"Nobody, sir, but Herr Bernhorst, the organist."

"Is he good to you?—Have you any talent of your own?—Play me something, if you can play;" and, quick as he was in every proceeding, Charles set the boy to the instrument.

The playing was not good for much: but enough to show a deep and real feeling for the art, in spite of the terror of the exhibitor.—"That is not your own music," said his host; "have you made anything of your own?"

The boy faltered through some small composition. This was not good for much either—but there were delicacy and feeling in it.

"Have you any brothers and sisters?"

"None, honoured sir."

"And you are bound apprentice to this organist?"

"O no, sir, and if I could not have got back to Rittersmerda by to-morrow (now I can, thanks to you!), he would not take me again—for he would hardly let me come.—But I would come; and I thought I should manage to get back in time: and anyhow . . . . Ah, that was music! I have heard it, and I can never forget it, and I shall never forget you."

"What would you say if, some day when you grow strong, I were to make you my secretary?"

If Charles threw out the possibility not in jest, yet not thinking the full import of his words, he was made aware of the terrible earnestness with which the boy grasped at the bare idea, by his cry of rapture.

"O, sir! if such a thing could be!—If, indeed, you could be so blessedly gracious.—O, if you could take me at once, only at once! I could go through fire and water to serve you! O, sir! I did not come to ask such a thing, indeed,—how could I dream it?—but I am so wretched where I am. . . .

What can I say to you to persuade you to try? . . ." The emotion was too strong for the poor weak boy, who had not broken his fast. He fainted.

"I should not have said such a thing," was the first thought which passed through the mind of Charles. His second was: "Suppose here should be something for me again really to attach myself to?"—And he thought of his dead friend as he bent over the boy; trying to revive him, and increasingly struck by the expression of those large but pale features.—So, not for the first time, he rushed to a decision on a matter of moment, careless of the consequences: and not counting the cost.—It never occurred to him that he was already deeply burdened: it never occurred to him to consider how far or otherwise such an appendage to their household might conduce to the comfort of his married life. His heart had spoken—and be the consequences what they might, he would not resist its impulse. To see that face, when the eyes opened, lit up with enthusiastic adoration, and trembling with eagerness, was worth any amount of diffi-

culty to be overcome. Ten words settled the business ere ten minutes had passed; it would have seemed as if the arrangement had been made years ago:—save for the hysteric ecstasy of the new inmate, thus raised to the seventh heaven.—Who that saw this could pause to dream of wanting money, or revert to one who never dreamed of sparing his purse?

True to her wilful nature, Marie had not spared him on this morning, of all mornings in the year.—She had not altogether lied when she told how Count Foltz had entertained her.—The Countess Schilkenstein's pets ran in her mind, even traversing that ghostly and penitential fright which had sent her forth to mass. There was a noted dog-fancier at Kaisersbad who had expressly aimed his wares at the insolent great lady, and in particular was holding out one especial treasure against her resolution to cheapen and beat him down—great, insolent ladies being not inept at such manœuvres. Madame Einstern had met the man at the church door, with the tiny animal in his arms,—and had there and then settled the

question: without a word of doubt or bargain.

"You see, my love, there was no letting that woman carry off my treasure.—Was ever anything so small? And look, what an angel of bad temper!—He would eat us all up, if he had any teeth worth speaking of. Would not you, my precious Cæsar?—And here's the man. You can afford one hundred *gulden*, though *she* cannot."

"My love, one hundred *gulden?*"

The dog-fancier was voluble in proclaiming the altogether unheard-of rarity of the specimen.—One thing only was equally unheard of—its cheapness.

"Well, my love," said he, when the money was paid, and the door shut, "don't buy anything more this week, if you can help—and content yourself with your new toy.—I have found one, too.—I must have somebody to write for me, and keep my music in order; and to keep my accounts.—This is my secretary."

"This!" cried she, throwing back her head with a ringing laugh, which would have been to any manager worth the price of the

dog thrice over.—"This! why, he's a cripple! What use can you make of him?"

"O, Marie!" cried her husband, struck to the heart by her thoughtless want of feeling—"your brother's sister should not have said such a thing. And in his hearing, too!" he added, drawing her aside.

"What?—I suppose this is another of the precious presents of yonder beauty?" cried the young wife.—"What made her come here to bring new people between us? We were so perfectly happy! Nay! I do not care who has heard me!"

"Marie!" (and he curbed himself with an effort he had never compelled himself to make till then)—"do not let me think I have married a child! What can this boy do to vex you?—What can anybody, so far as I am concerned, except it be yourself?—You are tired—you did not sleep well last night.—Go and try to take a little rest now, my love."—And he turned from her to the boy, who was quivering with a desire instantaneously to recommend himself to his new patron, and had shrunk into a corner.—"Madame Einstern spoke in a

hurry, Gottlieb,—she did not mean what she said.—We must see after some breakfast for you—and then I will tell you what you shall do for me."

It was the first reproach which had passed her husband's lips. — From that moment Marie hated the boy, as much as she could hate any being not of her own sex. —It availed nothing that Gottlieb was submissive and intelligent; that he watched every look of his benefactor and his benefactor's wife to anticipate their wishes; that he throve so rapidly, as to make it evident that his ailment had been mainly and merely hunger; —or rather, all these things *did* avail, as strengthening interests and affections in Charles, which she could not bear to see taking the direction of any living creature save herself. — "If I must yield up my wishes to him," ran her frivolous yet passionate thoughts, "for a while—I will have no rivals!"

Such was the attitude of the young couple during the first many months of their married life. There was no promise or prospect of children.

PART THE FIFTH.

THE RAPIDS.

CHAPTER I.

A ROYAL VISIT.

The months slipped rapidly by—the bright autumn—the long winter—the best part of a year, in short—without any outward change of great importance having taken place in the position of the actors of this story: one alone excepted, to whom we must, for a moment, return.

Miss Ann Ogg had for once told the truth, when she mentioned the possible

return of two of the Openshaws to the Lower Pavement.—Only a few days after witnessing the Munich tragedy before the Chenzikoff house, a letter of recal reached Susanna. The old man was on his way home. At another time, the summons would have been felt as almost a calamity; now, it came to a weary heart, longing for retreat and rest.—She wished to escape from the outcry and talk which pursued her everywhere.—Having interested her friend in the Prodigy's story, she could not seal it up between them without confessing . . . and Countess Westwood was more than usually ruthless and energetic on the subject of Charles—for *her* sake. Yes, though three months before she could not have believed it, it was a relief to return to England,—a relief to be deposited and left on the Lower Pavement—and to bend herself to the duty of the hour, which was to watch over the declining health of her father.—There had been no need, however, of Mistress Whitelamb to be afraid of the prying habits of her old neighbour being resumed. The once busy Quaker arrived

from the United States shrunk to a third of his former size—lean, bald, wrinkled, and weak, in gaiters, in intellect, in voice, in strength—an invalid, obviously doomed to vegetate during the rest of his life;—to be a child in the hands of his child;—and to enjoy, without questioning, the comforting viands sent in, as a matter of course, by the hospitable mistress of Number Seven—"there not being near him," she averred, "any creature who knew how to make such a common thing as mutton broth,—with proper English strength in it."

And yet—perhaps because of this deficiency which elevated her into an authority and a protectress—Mistress Galatea was mollified towards the daughter as well as the father, on their return.—The plain, yet refined candour of Susanna (she had not made her name graceful by shortening it into Susan)—the sweet, steady rectitude which showed itself in every plan and every arrangement of hers, made their way to one who was as true as truth, and as good as goodness. What a change was hers, from

the companionship of Countess Westwood for that of her decaying father!—The alert curiosity which had formerly made him brisk, if not intellectual company, was gone. —When, by way of suiting herself to his experiences, his daughter pressed him with questions as to his American adventures, he maundered through interminable details of missionary labour, told in a phraseology which Susanna had learned to find very strange. Her mother had worn out a frame never strong, by incessant change of place, and preaching.—But the preaching had not been a sowing of seed in stony places. Many cases of "openings" were narrated—the most remarkable one being the "convincement" of one Henry Paddox, "a person from parts near this, in whom thy Aunt Barton was interested, as it proved afterwards,—thy mother having a sense of weighty concern upon her, when she appeared in supplication. Thy mother was sought after by the magistrates in consequence: and some have said, that this led to Paddox having been discovered by persons from this country who had been in search

of him—and he will come, I expect, to England, presently, in the *Beagle*, Captain Potts."

The convert's name caught Susanna's ear. Here were Drearmouth and the Dyke at Ostend turning up again; and she smiled at the fantastic thought—never altogether extinct with some of us—that everybody will come back to light sooner or later; however totally for the time they seem lost. —"But how they come back changed!" she said to herself, shivering as if a sudden chill had passed over her; and the coincidence was presently forgotten, in stronger and tenderer associations perpetually brought before her.

She may be pardoned for finding some relief from the weary stories droned into her ear at home, in the scene of her old happiness, Number Seven. As all was over—all safe beyond the reach of matrimonial speculation—Mistress Galatea, forbidden to indulge in the subject of Lady Caldermere, found it delightful to have a listener to whom she could prattle concerning her dream—her Prodigy—the one who had infused a sparkle

of romance into her simple work-a-day existence. As early as their second session in company, the two were eagerly deep in the subject of Charles. It was easier for Susanna to talk of her old playfellow there, than in the neighbourhood of The Hirsch. There was no impetuous, cutting reflections (painful insomuch as they approached the truth) to be apprehended.—And she at once won her neighbour by saying on report (Heaven knows! report had given her nothing else good to say) that Madame Einstern was everywhere spoken of as the most beautiful, and most exquisitely dressed woman in Germany.

"The dear fellow! so like himself!" was Mistress Galatea's comment. "Yes! He had what I call taste! He always could choose the best of the best!—and well he deserved to have it. My love, does this hot weather make you pale? Try a sip of my orange brandy.—And, my love, look at that picture in a frame.—I would have worked it in tent-stitch, only my eyes are not so good as they were when Mr. Smalley used to

call me the Linwood of Blackchester. He used, indeed."

The "picture" consisted of certain gold pieces arranged in the form of a heart, in the midst of a thicket of forget-me-nots traversed by a dark path, which was made of a long lock of hair.

"I have as many coins for you," said Cousin Gatty, "which he sent to me for you—not knowing you had removed; but no curl with *them*. As I did not know where to find you, I wanted Mr. Justin to take care of them: but no.—So Mr. Ogg, my trustee, has put them into the savings-bank, in my name. There they are: safe."

The smile of pleasure which crossed Susanna's face passed in a moment. She remembered that strange, chilling meeting with the Prodigy in Munich.

"I should like to see her, and him too, God bless him!" rambled on the other sweetly-natured woman: "but I suppose I never shall.—They will never let him come to Caldermere.—Even my Lady . . . and Lord Caldermere is furious, they say, if his

very name is mentioned :—though nothing ever seemed to ruffle him.—It may be, however, his complaints which make him testy. Susanna, that is not a happy house. O! but I ought not to breathe such a syllable! They are all so kind to me—yes, and Master Justin too,—though I have not seen him lately, since he got into trouble. Poor fellow, I honour him for it more than I could have once thought possible;—since it was all on our dear boy's account."

"How did Mr. Justin get into trouble?" was Susanna's natural question.

"His name, my dear—Einstern Bower, you see.—When the Royal party came to Caldermere,—only conceive what happened!"

"Master Justin?—You know I have been so long abroad, that I have almost forgotten him, as much as he has forgotten me.—What happened?"

"My dear, you cannot conceive, as I said: —so I will begin at the beginning, with the Royal visit.—Was it not considerate their asking me? Such a day has not been seen in the county since I was born. The house—no, I used to think that nothing

could improve it—but the splendour of the Royal ladies' rooms—they slept there two nights—was like a faëry tale—pink satin, my dear, festooned with real lace. And scarlet cloth laid down on the steps to the terrace! And an orange-tree, which took six men to lift it, on each step,—and all the paths among the flowers on the terrace laid down with pounded spar: and a military band from London, which struck up 'God Save the Queen' so soon as the carriages came in sight.—There were three carriages, Lord Caldermere's the first—and, I must say, the handsomest.

"Don't expect me to give you a hundredth part of the list of the quality invited. The Blackchester people had tents in the park. We had heard tea—but it proved a dinner, my love, with real champagne—and they do say that Miss Ann Ogg partook of a sip too much, and behaved anything but retiringly. She was in a tent. *We* were on the terrace with the family.

"Well, my dear, and would you believe it?—when Lord Caldermere was coming up the steps, with the Royal Duchess on his

arm, he stopped absolutely before Miss Scatters and me in our turns.—She wore a brown velvet, and I know who gave it her. Lady Caldermere had kindly wished to press a velvet on me, too.—But I thought I was best as I was: in my own little sphere.—What would dear Mr. Smalley have said to see me in a velvet?—I confined myself to my poplin; so I have never put it on since. We were standing together—not as much out of the way as I could have wished—and he said—not 'Your Majesty,' but 'Madam'—yes, 'Madam,' he said—'Madam, permit me to present a valuation!'—no, 'valued relation,' it was,—'of my family'—and he named her.—Miss Scatters forgot herself, I fear, for she only cried 'Hech!' and did nothing else but stare.—As Mr. Smalley used to say, 'the Scotch are so rugged,'—though she may be a good woman.—I was in hopes to be passed over—but thought it safer to keep on curtseying—but Lord Caldermere would not let me off either; for he stopped downright again, and said, 'A value—another valued relation of my wife's family;' and named me:—and

both the Royal ladies, the old and the young one, looked most exceeding pleasant—and the young one asked me if I had always lived in this part of the country: and I said, 'Please your Majesty, yes,—with Mr. Smalley.'—As I have since mentioned to Mr. Ogg, I could never have believed that I should have mustered courage enough to hear my own voice:—but the truly great, my dear, are always indulgent.—I used to be much more afraid of Mrs. Meggley down in Blackchester, even before she married that rude George the boots."

It was hopeless to interrupt or abridge the flow of these recollected honours and glories.—Ere Susanna could put in a word to bring the dear lady to a point, she had comfortably scratched her forehead under her front of curls with her knitting-needle, and was off at score again.

"I despair of the dinner, my dear. The bills of fare were worked with gold thread on white velvet.—I ventured to beg one—it is there, in a frame, beside Aunt Sarah Jane's bird's-nest in chenille.—(Lady Caldermere's mother, you know.)—No!—the

flowers and the gold plate,—what would Mr. Smalley have said at my dining off gold plate?—and the variety of dishes—and wines.—If I had not taken great care, I might have conducted myself as boldly as Miss Ann Ogg—such were my spirits!—but I restricted myself to port.—But, do you know, grand as the dinner was, Susanna, there was no joint! It was so.

"Something was wanted in the course of the dinner,—or somebody wished to know how far it was to Wrocksley Abbey—yes, it was that,—and Lord Caldermere, who sat in the middle of the table,—my dear, top and bottom would have been more to the purpose (but I'm old-fashioned),—said, 'Einstern, *you* can tell . . .'

"'Einstern!' somebody caught up—I believe it was one of the Royal ladies.—'Why, you are a namesake, Mr. Bower, to the great pianist we heard at Munich.—What a genius!'—I thought of dear Charles, and could have clapped my hands to hear him praised so; only, one can't in company.

"'O!' one of the gentlemen belonging to the Royal ladies went on (you see, my dear,

—I hear it is part of their duty to keep up a tropic—I mean a topic)—'Einstern! yes, quite a Harold Child' (what is that?) 'he must be, with all his genius:—and so young, too! Why, he wounded in the face the Russian Princess who had fed and clothed and brought him up—because she would not marry him.—And he ran away, two hours afterwards, with a common *ballet-girl*. But, of course, that makes him all the more the rage:—and the women are fighting for locks of his hair, and his old gloves!'

"My dear, had I not been sitting, I must have dropped—not that the slander was new to me.—If you could have seen my Lady—she sat the picture of a shroud—if you could only have seen Lord Caldermere!—But I hardly could—it was as if some one had let off a water-mill in my ears! Yet I *did* see, and did hear, Master Justin:—who was carried out of himself, as they were passing the peach-ice—I think he even got half up out of his chair.—'Captain Doncaster,' he said—I hear him now, as I sit—'I am sure that you are not aware that you are speak-

ing of my brother! It is a mistake throughout.—My brother was brought up by no Russian Princess. He has committed no such violence as you have mentioned—and the young lady whom he has married' (how he said *married!*) 'has never been on the stage.' There was a dead silence, for I did not know which way to look—and then—I am not sure, the great Caldermere pears came round—the prize pears, you know, dear—and everybody tasted them.—But Mr. Justin and my Lord have never been friends since.—I honour him for it—though Miss Scatters, she says, that for him to own to having a brother who is a musician, was a disrespect to their Highnesses."

If Susanna's eyes were full, her heart was fuller.

"You are not shocked, dear?" said Mistress Galatea, anxious for a suffrage.

"I?—It was brave of Mr. Justin—braver than I could have expected from him.—He used to seem to me so matter-of-fact—so heavy."

"My dear, and he is both:—receives pickles for himself from Germany in little barrels,

which are enough to impair any man's capacity.—But I could have kissed him that night.—And it is a pity, if it be so, that it has set my Lord against him—because, if my Lord's health be breaking—and there are other stories, you know, about lawsuits, flying about Blackchester,—my Lord would be lost without his right-hand man.—But so it is, dear. We must all take the part of Charles."

"And Lady Caldermere?"

"Well, my dear, I would rather not broach that question.—She is not what she used to be: and is always parting with her maid—not that Miss Ann Ogg is right in ascribing it to her wish still to look like a girl, which others find it difficult to fulfil, especially when one frets.—But this I must say—she looks as if she had seen the Face—(don't you remember asking about the Face that happy day at Caldermere?)—and goes talk—talking on, I sometimes think, when she does not know or care what she is saying.—No wonder she is anxious, if she be.—My Lord is trying first one physician, and then another. Mr.

Smalley always used to say it looked ill when people changed their doctors or their sittings in church too often:—but I cannot hear that any of them can make out what ails him. And so, here come tea and the hot crumpets at last.—High time, Betty."

CHAPTER II.

A GIANT IN A NET.

THE events of the Royal visit to Caldermere were little calculated to sweeten the temper of its master towards his wife and son-in-law. The scandal about Charles had been fixed fast in his mind by an apology which the equerry thought fit to make, for his thoughtlessness in having repeated what "*those* papers" had said. "Every word false—not a doubt of it; and you may be sure, my Lord, I could not have the slightest idea that *that* was the Einstern in whom you are interested."—Of course, the explanation could not be received other than graciously. That the mistake could have been made on

purpose, by way of annoying Lord Caldermere, through his lady, in the moment of their glory—after his having turned a deaf ear to the solicitations of many persons of quality—was an idea too preposterous to occur to any person; however familiar the same be with the charity and gratitude of the world of Fashion—unless, perhaps, he chance to be in a morbid state of suspicion.

How far such was the great man's case will never be known; for more impenetrably than ever he locked up much that was passing in his mind from outer scrutiny.—It may be divined, however, that he was not made more placable and less attentive by alighting on a fact hitherto unknown to him at Bower Mills. There, in Justin's books, which he had never till then examined, save in Justin's presence, he came upon traces of a sum of money invested in Lady Caldermere's name.—Of this he had never heard till then. What money could it be?—for the sum was not inconsiderable.—How had she come by it?—"Justin shall tell me.—But it is obviously a secret between the two.—Let them keep it. I will not ask them."

—And he shut-to the book, with an oath which belonged to the Blackchester days of John Bower:—too haughty in his obstinacy to condescend to seek explanation of a fact which was singular,—but, of course, he said of no importance.

They remarked at Caldermere his bent brow and his ashen complexion; they were aware of his increased silence; and the sternness of manner which repelled all inquiry:—but they had only a partial idea what the causes might be.—The letters to him from Mr. Torris no longer passed through Justin's hands. He did not dream of the pressing nature of the intelligence concerning the disputed title which was shut up in those large envelopes, now arriving with alarming frequency.—Here, again, the isolation into which Lord Caldermere had retired with his usual decision, stood him in bad stead.—His strength of mind might not be less than it was in his youth—but it was now dangerously warped: impelling him in a fatal direction. His soundness of judgment had become freaked with perversity. The concealed mistake of his

life, in his marriage with the Prodigy's mother (he thought fixedly of his wife as the Prodigy's mother), had acted as a canker, which, unseen and unsuspected, had eaten to the core.—His London legal advisers, a pair of sagacious and upright men, shook their heads at his instructions: and yet more at his indomitable resolution to admit as important no jot or tittle of evidence that went to weaken his preconceived conclusions. —"My Lord carries it with a high hand," said Mr. Torris, looking after him as he left the office one day, at the close of an interview in which nobody was satisfied. "That man has the strength of a giant."

So are people in this world of ours judged by their nerve, and its power of enabling them to present to others that only which they choose to be seen!—So the criminal, guilty of the brutal and paltry murder of an old man,—shall, because he is young, and has a plausible voice and a cold hand, be reputed as innocent and ripe for Heaven, though to the last he has been elaborating in his defence a tissue of lies—the least of which throws a stigma of suspicion on some

one not really culpable.—And so, in the sympathy inspired by this dramatic candour and sanctity,—shall all pity for the murdered man, or feeling for the victims of bereavement, be trampled under foot and forgotten!

Giant or no giant, the state of mind in which Lord Caldermere took refuge in his club that day, was not to be envied. The weight of displeasure rather than misgiving which was settling on his spirit, was not lightened by the perpetual consciousness of physical pain.—The world was out of town: the dining-room was comparatively empty: but he ensconced himself in a dark and remote corner, to escape greeting and conversation. He did not wish that any one should ask him what had brought him up to London at that dead time of the year. Still less did he desire to be talked to on the subject of the Royal visit.

His solitary dinner was eccentric and luxurious. With his health his appetite had vanished: but he held stoutly to his old opinions.—In his days of herculean strength and digestion, he had been in the habit of maintaining that whatever was the most

unwholesome, should be eaten till a man's stomach became used to it—and he still clung to his amazing theory, though it had made every physician whom he consulted shake his head as ominously as Mr. Torris had done.—That day, in the fulness of indisposition to eat, he sat playing with his fork and trifling with his wine — in appearance deliberately studying the neatly-folded paper at his elbow — in reality trying to wrest himself away from the importunate suggestions which had that morning been offered to him.—There happened, moreover, on that day, to be war-rumours in the paper which boded ill for the manufacturing interest—on every side something unpleasant to be disposed of.

And behind him, to make his discomfort complete, were dining two persons, who, like himself, had sought a far corner for the discussion of some interesting topic. He knew one of these without turning his head: for whatever Mr. Quillsey had to say, was spoken, as it were, from a mountain-top, and the high-pitched voice could not be stifled. —And Mr. Quillsey was more elate and

audible than usual, from having risen in the scale of society, so as to have been elected by the Acropolis Club, within whose halls he was then eating his first dinner.—There was some splendid plan of decoration by him to be settled: but the voice of the interlocutor farthest from Lord Caldermere could not be heard,—only the answers.—"Why, Count, we all know these things can *not* be carried out for a trifle: but you may rely on me . . . . Outdo Caldermere? No—I said to Madame, positively, no. There is a happy combination of circumstances about that place of my friend Lord Caldermere's, which is unique. Her Royal Highness said so to my friend Lady Mickleham, when she came back from her visiting tour. . . . And now, I am sure, you will be glad to get rid of domestic architecture for a while.—'*Suprême de faisan au barillet.*' Mrs. Quillsey's cook piques herself on the *plat.* We brought it from Paris when it was new.—Let us see how they manage it here."

There wanted but the irritation of this busy gadfly!—Lord Caldermere was in no humour for recognition, so he sat still. But

he need not have feared.—When Mr. Quillsey, having tasted and approved the dish, like one who knows, was afloat again—it was to launch into a charming conversation concerning a marvellous cure, of some one by somebody, which seemed fresh as a topic.

"I positively could not tear myself away from your lady. The facts Madame mentioned were so truly extraordinary.—Such a cure of such a case, that has distanced all the faculty in every capital of Europe—and within the compass of only one half year! . . . Perfectly just; and yet I should have thought from what we could make out that Electro-Biology *had* something to do with it, though you tell me not. . . . Quite an enthusiast Doctor Mondor must be, as you say—totally different from those common quacks, who can hardly advertise themselves too loudly. . . . Yes, only one patient at a time, Madame said . . . and this last poor lady has been pronounced hopeless. I said to Madame" (with an artful laugh) "that she could do no less than marry him out of gratitude, if he cured her.—She is very rich. . . ."

There was more of the tale—far more than the reader could hear without weariness, especially in this divided form—but it would seem as if Lord Caldermere had listened to it—and not without curiosity: since, after having availed himself of his neighbour's devotion to the *soufflé* to escape from his corner unseen, he stopped at the door to ask the attendant a question.

"Who is that stout gentleman in the corner, dining with Mr. Quillsey?"

"There, my Lord?—That is Count Baltakis: the great Greek fortune, who has just married Miss Hosea."

"Baltakis," said Lord Caldermere to himself, making a note in his memorandum-book. "If I should want any information, I can get at *him* through Pendragon. Though who cares whether I live or die? Not these doctors here, at all events."

On that day of displeasure, the once strong man had been unusually dissatisfied by the opinion which Sir Matthew, after Sir Mark and Sir Luke had been discarded, had pronounced on his case. Each of the three great medical authorities had assured

Lord Caldermere that there was internal disorder of a grave and complicated nature, which might be kept at bay—but which at his time of life required serious attention. —Sir Matthew, perhaps as the most suave of the three, but certainly as confirming their verdict, had been the most distasteful to the obstinate and impatient invalid.

"Namby-pamby fool!" had been my Lord's exclamation, as he left the great medical presence; "only fit to mouse about old ladies in waiting! Avoid all anxiety, and travel about to amuse myself, forsooth! And these are the idiots who make fortunes by their pretty speeches."

In such a mood as this,—with every rebellious atom in his character intensified by the cares which were closing round him,—the talk which he had heard at dinner, even though it trickled from no wiser lips than those of Mr. Quillsey, would come back to him again and again.—The strongest men bear pain the worst—are the least able to understand that mortality has claims on them as well as on the cripples whom they send into hospitals—as on the paupers whom

their charity buries.—Such men as Lord Caldermere have never reckoned on Time and Decay: and accordingly, when these two spectres first clutch them, they are apt to sink, to despond—or else to carry out every action of their past lives by irrational efforts to get rid of their masters—the first who have ever mastered them.

He would hear from Count Baltakis himself what was the right and the wrong of this story about the foreign physician. And so stayed he for a few days in town, accordingly—sought out Mr. Pendragon; made the desired acquaintance;—and came to a decision, which he communicated to no one at Caldermere.

CHAPTER III.

BRILLIANT PROSPECTS.

"*Bower Mills, New Year's Day,* 18—

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—I have waited week after week, in the hopes of hearing from you.—I will wait no longer, but write to you on this day of remembrances of the past, and best wishes for the year to come. Why do you not write to us, Charles?—As to myself I say nothing—save that I fancy I must have offended you unintentionally when I meant only your good—but our mother feels it deeply—and I ask, without the slightest idea of dictating, whether it was giving yourself or your wife a fair chance not to let us know the particulars of your sudden marriage. It was only very

lately that a communication from Mr. Orelius, in answer to an inquiry of mine, enabled me, by offering proof positive, to silence injurious reports, by which some unkind persons, whom and why I cannot trace, have been actively trying to damage you with those who, alas! are already sufficiently prejudiced against you. You will say it does not matter, as you cannot, I presume, be thinking of coming to England: but your friends have suffered much pain: not as believing for an instant anything to your discredit, but as witnessing the effect of false representations.

"Well, they are over, thank God!—and with our affectionate hearts your mother and I wish you and your beautiful wife every blessing that happiness and success can bestow. Her being an artist will draw you closer together.

"I must now mention a matter of business. A certain sum of money which I have invested on your behalf has grown into three thousand pounds of English currency. How shall I remit it to you? For you may want it now—be you ever so pros-

perous—and though I suppose, for a time at least, you will hardly be a householder. I have little news that you will care to hear. My own life is what it has always been—not without anxiety—though I have been less incessantly occupied than formerly. I think you ought to know that Lord Caldermere's health appears to be seriously impaired: and that some of the first physicians in London have been consulted by him, without any improvement of it. My mother keeps her health, but has suffered much anxiety on your account.—She sends her love and blessing.

"Cousin Gatty, who ages very gently, talks of you incessantly, and never sees me but she asks if you are grown, and sends you her love. The Quaker family that you used to take a fancy to, I recollect, on the Lower Pavement, has returned after an absence of some years in America.—The mother is dead.

"Now, do not forget us.—Sister: make him write to both.

"Your affectionate brother,

"JUSTIN."

This was the letter which, after many months of wandering through those abysses of neglect and confusion, German post-offices—was brought one morning to the Prodigy by Gottlieb.—He had fished it out, somehow, from a hopeless batch, on having been sent to inquire by Madame Einstern, who was expecting a letter from one of her old playfellows—so Gottlieb let out on his return.

"From which of them?" said Charles to her, holding his own with the seal uppermost. "Are you becoming a letter-writing lady, Marie?"

She darted an angry look at the boy. "I said nothing about playfellows,—*I* had none, as you know well.—I merely told Gottlieb to ask at the post, as one always does: and this is what you make of it. He is hopelessly stupid. From whom is your letter?—from which of *your* playfellows?—That fat creature with the apple-face?"

"No!" was his reply, looking at his letter with an instant start, and a disturbance of countenance which did not escape her jealousy. "From England."

"How am I to know that it is from England?" said she, in her most fond and caressing way, flinging herself on her husband's shoulder, and playing with his hair.—"The direction is in German writing."

"Ah, Marie! you must be contented without knowing everything. This is a day of letters. Two have come already from Dietrichsen's" (the banker's), "and I am perplexed by them.—I was going to talk to you about them when Gottlieb came in."

"Is it anything about me?" was her hurried question. "Go, Gottlieb—you are always wanting to listen."

"No, child. One is from my good old friend and master, Doctor Orelius. It is as I feared, from what Burgomaster Twiese told me.—They have taken advantage of scandals which were circulated in my time,—about me and, listen (do put that ribbon down), *your brother*;—to deprive him of a great part of his income.—They have taken away his professorship. They would take away his pulpit, if they could.—And he has nothing laid by. He was so good to the poor, though Mrs. Orelius tried to restrain

him—and once—I beg you to listen—absolutely got back a blanket which he had given away to old Mrs. Rosenthal."

"Well?—and so he has written to you to ask for money?"

"Not he: but he is much hurt.—His old friend, Burgomaster Twiese . . . ."

"That fat girl's father. . . . Thank you, Charles"—and she made a face, which was, for a passing moment, blown up into a caricature of the visage of Minna Twiese. "I knew there was no getting rid of her; and, please, has she thrown you the handkerchief again?" And Marie threw her handkerchief towards the door, with an attitude that Morgiana might have envied. —"If she has, I'll tear it up, as I did the other one.—I will, sir."

"You tigress!" he said this in a still, sad tone, though forcing a show of gaiety.—"If I were to become jealous of *you!* . . . ."

"You could not!—You dare not!—You know I give you no cause!—You know my love is yours, and yours only—soul and body!—Aye!—and I may live to prove it, some day, in a manner you little expect.—

You know I don't look at—don't listen to any man save yourself!"

O, if Charles could only, then, have made an answer, ever so little corresponding to her burst of passion!—if they could have then come a single step nearer one to the other! —But he could not lie—and, alas! he did not love her.—He only said, "There's no new handkerchief, Marie. You shall read the letter, and perhaps it will make you a little sorry about dear old Mr. Orelius—and perhaps" (this with more gaiety) "you will be a little less sorry, when I show you how we can help him, without ruining you and your little dog."

"Ah, Cæsar! How you hate the poor darling! — because he bites that boy of yours."

"My second letter, dear—not this one" —he kept his elbow on Justin's unread epistle—"is also from England."

"From those English women who were at The Hirsch the night when you took me away?—Yes, I know: and I know more about you . . . ."

"I dare say, more than I know myself. . . .

but what would you say to a sight of London?—I am offered a month's engagement—only for four concerts—and—I cannot believe it—a thousand pounds English."

"Who *is* she?"

"My dear—for ever jealous!—Look at the letter.—It is a man's:—and he seems to be a Greek merchant, or ambassador.—A simple offer!" (and he traced out every word for her with his finger) "for me to play at four private concerts in London, and to take no other engagements during that one month,—for a thousand pounds.—It is madness!"—(but he drew himself up as he said it—for in his heart he believed he was worth twice the money).—"If I were to accept the engagement, half shall go to dear old Orelius.—You see,—you *see*, Marie, I have no secrets from *you*—half *shall:* and would you not like to look at London?"

"To be sure I should! . . . ."

"That is, *if* I accept the offer."

"But you hated England, you always said."

"And I had cause.—But you!—Tell me,

if you don't care for it, and I will not go, —though I should like to help dear old Orelius.—What it is to be an artist!"

"Ah! what indeed!" was the wife's buoyant answer—and she nestled close—closer to her husband—and kissed him many times, with some unexpected air and grace between kiss and kiss:—ending, after every kiss—with "O, certainly—London by all means!—Well, now, and *that* letter?" She tried, as she spoke, to withdraw the folded paper from beneath his elbow.

"This I must read alone," said Einstern, seriously. "It is from my brother."

"I do not believe you!" was her vehement answer. "Because if it was, he is *my* brother too! and I have as much right to hear it as you!"

"I assure you—I swear to you—Marie, it is from my brother; but it *can* contain nothing which you would like to hear.—I have broken off all intercourse with my family too completely and for ever, to think of resuming it. It is merely some dull lecture in the old style—and with the old pretence of affection. Had they loved me,

indeed, your brother might have been alive."

"Ah! and then, you might never have married me.—Is that what you mean?—And then I might have been . . . ." She stopped suddenly. Each had a thought which was not to be shown. That of Charles was—"She has but spoken the truth, and, O God! would that Becker *had* lived!"—and with it came floating past him in procession one fair face after another—and with it rushed into his memory one opportunity after another, which already his young life had afforded him, of approaching, on terms not so much of equality as of condescension, some of the brightest, fairest, most gifted of Eve's daughters:—and with it he heard that exquisite cordial voice, with the best memories of his boyhood in every tone of it—to which he had replied so restrainedly, so unkindly,—on that decisive evening at Munich.—He could not bear it. He could not control himself to answer her—took up the letter in haste—hid it in his bosom—dashed out of the room and double-locked the door of his study.—He might

have been, an instant afterwards, heard —he was by Gottlieb—sobbing violently.

But his wife did not follow him with comfort for his distress. Into such love as hers, for her sympathy does not enter.—"It is from some woman!" she exclaimed; and catching her own figure in the glass, there stood Medea.—"O yes! to England by all means!"

Then she took a note from her bosom, and perused it with as much thoughtfulness as she could command: looked at her watch: crept on tiptoe to his door to listen—peeping here and there, to assure herself that she was neither watched nor followed;—and, in another instant, she was equipped and out in the street.

They were again at Dresden: having made that capital their winter-quarters.—The day was harsh and gloomy; and the morning hour one when few walkers were abroad: fewest on the Bruhl Terrace, whither she was bound.

"Ugh! how I shiver," she said to herself, as the wind blew cold upon her from the

Elbe. "Doctor Orelius, indeed! and a thousand pounds for four concerts! As if I was such a child as that—as if I believed it! We shall see! we shall see!—But there he is."

From the other end of the deserted promenade the one other walker approached, and passed Madame Einstern. The first time they met the two gave no sign of recognition:—she went steadily on. On turning at the end of the bastion, however, she perceived that the man, as she expected, had also turned—and was at her side:—a shabby, elderly man—more muffled up than seemed necessary, though the morning was raw and cold:—and in spite of his mufflings, bearing a strong resemblance to Meshek, the Jew.

"I said ten," said she, in a low voice, "because Mr. Einstern is engaged, and will be till one.—Have you the key?"

"I have, gracious lady."

She took it.—"Will he be exact?"

"At the quarter, gracious lady."

"Go, then," she said, giving the man a piece of money,—"and recollect you are not

to show yourself in our neighbourhood—and not to know me, if we meet in the streets.—Go that way."

The man bowed obsequiously; and, with a quick step, Madame Einstern disappeared down the side flight of steps by which the heart of the town is reached from the Bruhl Terrace.—Then he spat on the piece of money; and laughed to himself a laugh not pleasant to hear.

"Um!—little do you know what you have married, Master Einstern!" And Meshek shuffled away.

CHAPTER IV.

AN UNEXPECTED BLESSING.

"It was their doing! It was their doing!" Charles reiterated, passionately, when he was alone with his brother's letter.—"Had they helped me when I asked them (and a mighty help it was I asked!), he might have been living still—and this terrible charge not have been laid on me.—But they shall never know how terrible it is!—They shall never humble me!—And I will try—I WILL try to do what is right by yonder poor perverse creature, and to keep her from going wrong."

"Are you ill, master?" asked a timid boy's voice at the door.

"No . . no . . good boy; only busy. . . . Go and tell Wiertz that they must rehearse the symphony first: and see that all the parts of the Concerto are there. I shall be with them in half an hour."

Strange—or not strange to those who have watched natures like his when in a morbid state—Justin's plain, brotherly, kind letter, merely served to anger him.—"They want to patronise me? They want to humble me! They want to buy me off! Not thinking of my going to England! O, I suppose, afraid of their grandeur! They shall see."—If he felt within himself that he was perversely putting a worse construction on good meanings than they deserved, he became only the more obstinately angry for his very self-reproach.

"And my wife, too! poor headstrong Marie!—Spying and writing to that poor good old Orelius, to find out all about her! —Why did not they write to me?—They dared not, for my poor Becker's sake!—And taking it for granted, forsooth, that I would let a wife of mine exhibit herself as a dancer—the people who have professed

such a holy horror of my Lord's son-in-law figuring at a pianoforte!—It is too insolent!—What was their Lord Caldermere, after all?—No, she SHALL go to England, and be as much of a fine lady there as Lady Caldermere!"—And with the uncalculating extravagance of imagination, his fancy ran from one gift to another by which he would set off her peerless beauty. —"Let them see if I draw on any of their charitable investments to keep us out of their way!"—was the close of his meditation, spoken aloud, as he paced the room with the old vehement excitement of his school-days.—So the engagement of Count Baltakis was at once graciously accepted.

Such was the perverse fashion in which a kind and sincere expression of affection could work on a partially diseased mind. Charles had never owned to himself how much he had chafed under the few cautious and kind lines which Colonel Vandaleur had written to him; nor how they had taken him back to what had passed between them in Tübingen. Every thought of pride, every feeling of suffering, every affectionate and

grateful purpose, turned in one and the same direction.

The preparations for a journey, to which he irritably attached an importance even greater than an engagement in its splendour so flattering to his reputation, naturally absorbed much time and attention. By straining himself to the utmost—by more frequent appearances in public than befitted his strength—by taking advantage of offers made him from publishers who were in a fever-heat of contention to secure him—and by raising money on compositions to be written—he was thus able to provide a sumptuous outfit for his wife: one which ought to have made her heart leap for joy.—But no—an odd humour was upon her.—She received all the trinkets, and laces, and silks, and shawls, with approval (for the idea of declining a gift as too costly for her husband's circumstances never entered her brain), but they were laid aside with a certain indifference, as though they were so many matters of course. It became obvious to him, that by no possible effort or expenditure could he satisfy her tastes for matters

of luxury.—It was sad that every day should seem to set their sympathies more and more widely apart: and this at a juncture when his pride demanded that no one desirous to humble him should be able, for a passing instant, to say that his marriage was other than the happiest marriage earth had ever seen.

Preparation went on briskly: and the time for departure approached. A few days before it took place, Charles stretched across from Dresden to Prague on a musical journey so hurried, that, for the first time in their married life, he was compelled to leave his wife. During so rapid a flight, it was a relief to be attended only by Gottlieb—to whom he was becoming sincerely attached. The boy, in turn, was making himself more and more useful to his patron.

Theirs was a gay and successful expedition. Charles put away the feverish and angry and perplexed thoughts which had so lately borne him company, and had such a share in his anticipations of England; and felt—for the last time during how long and weary a period!—like a boy out of school.—Who

cannot recal some such blessed snatch of respite—some such moments of freshness and freedom from anxiety—which have in them a spirit beyond those of nature and reason? —In the full enjoyment of the moment, the Prodigy could half deceive himself that days might be coming when he should be able to influence Marie.—He fancied she had been less frivolous of late.—He had caught her spelling her way (I should be grieved to make clear how incomplete she was as a reader) through an odd volume of Plutarch—which was not in his little collection of books.

"Gottlieb!" said he, suddenly recollecting this as the carriage rolled on, "how did you come by the Plutarch I saw my wife reading the other day?"

"I?—sir—I have no such book—I wish I had: for I love ancient history.—It is Madame's, I think, the book you must mean. When I requested her gracious permission to let me read it, she was not pleased: and told me not to tell you about it.—And I have not seen it since."

"Ah! well!" thought Charles, resolute to enjoy his present contented state. "It is odd; —I suppose that she means to surprise me

some day. Poor Becker always hoped she would—he said she could—take to reading; and anything is better for her than those horrid Vienna romances—her aunt's choice, I dare say. Poor girl! she has never had a chance!" And with that he began to sing, half unconsciously, a well-known light-hearted student song, which Gottlieb caught up. Neither the youth nor the boy had a supportable voice: and the two laughed like children at the queer concord. They were obliged to stop, for they were close on the splendid and Eastern-looking city. It was years after this before Charles sang or laughed again!

Nothing, I have said, could be more successful than the entire expedition.—Einstern was received at Prague with shouts of rapture by a crowded audience. He played the best of his best: with no jealously troubled beauty close at his side—but, in her place, the faithful Gottlieb to turn the leaves. The enthusiasm of the women passed all bounds, and he could enjoy it without stint, or suspicion from any one.

It was too short a holiday—the sunshine

of only one day—a morning, an evening—a supper, where more wine was drunk, and louder nonsense talked, and more part-songs were sung, than ever were drunk, and talked, and sung, since Bohemia was a kingdom.—After the supper came a serenade, given to the artist on one of the richest, softest moonlight nights which ever added a touch of magic to the fantastic spires, and turrets, and gables of the Grosse Ring. As Charles loitered in the quaint balcony, with friendly smiles kindling, and fair words of which he was the theme speaking on every side of him, and the rich mellowed concert of men's voices singing beneath him,—"Yes," he said, with full eyes and a fuller heart,—"there is something, after all, in being an artist!"

Master and man had to turn back to Dresden very early the following morning: and on their way, still under the intoxication of the spell, Charles poured out a thousand plans, each more high-flown than its predecessor, of what was to be done and dared when he came back from England. "Come now, Gottlieb," said he, as they were driving into Dresden—too full of excite-

ment not to wish to make every one near him happy,—"you shall not be left behind, moping here:—to copy my scores, and to read my proofs.—You can do that as well in England as here.—You shall go with Madame Einstern and myself, and shall pick up as much of the language as you can!"

The boy almost screamed with delight.

The two were at home—alas! too soon—at such a home, at least, as migratory artists can make.—A weight went up the stairs in the feet of one who had been, till his arrival there, so light hearted.

His wife was there: waiting for him: and if a painter had desired a model for a figure of "Expectation"—not Anxiety—he could have found nothing more exquisite and appropriate than that in that chamber.—She was lying on a sofa, in a waking dream:—and that the dream was of him, those beautiful eyes of hers conveyed, when he entered the room with a kind, not an eager, "Marie, dear!"—But she did not rise.—There was a look, however, in her face, the meaning of which he might have explored—had he

loved her.—He was to be startled by its solution from her own lips.

She took the filigree *Sévigné*, bought at Prague for her, as he gave it her, touching her lips the while with his, almost without looking at it—though she gave back the kiss passionately. "And what," was her mocking answer, "do you think I can give you in return, sir?—Come:—first a letter from your fat darling, Miss Minna Twiese. I know it, because she put her name on the outside—see! in the corner—and, secondly, a piece of news."

Charles broke the seal: and laughed aloud as he read it, though he thought of the storm which its contents would raise.—"Why, Marie,—don't faint—don't scratch out my eyes! Minna has absolutely heard a report that I was going to London—and wants to know whether we will graciously take charge of her.—Her father is too ill to make the journey: and some cousins at Camburywell—where is that?—have asked her to pay them a visit. You looked so kindly at her, she says, as well as so handsome and so loving for me that night, that

she is sure you will not refuse her this favour.—Read.—I wonder you did not open it, when you saw the name."

The young wife looked demure and not pleased — but she was making some progress in commanding her passions. There was no outburst.—" I am afraid," she said, with an equivocal smile, " that I cannot contribute to Miss Twiese's flattering plan —because—only think!—I must let you go by yourself to London."

Charles started. " What, you, Marie! so fond of change! so fond of new shows!—What do you mean? What is this?—and when everything has been arranged?"

" You may be sure," was her reply, " that I have more than common reason."

" Reason!" (" Who ever heard you give a reason?" was rising to her husband's lips, only he stopped the question.) " What reason? Tell me, dearest?"

" What would you most wish to hear, dearest?" was her honeyed reply. " Put your ear down—I must lie still to-day. I am about to become a mother."

The young husband staggered from the

sofa, and sat down for a second, unable to deal with an announcement so wholly unexpected. "*Another tie!*" was the first clear thought which would arise: but directly followed a more generous one,—that Heaven might be sending in it the redeeming, rescuing, ripening influence, so fearfully wanted by that wayward, worldly creature!—The prophecy had even already produced a calming effect on his wife, he fancied. She looked quietly—whereas he had only till then seen her look wildly—radiant.—"Are you quite sure?" said he, approaching her tenderly.—"Is there no possibility that you may be . . . may be deceived?—The news is too . . . ."

"Too precious? Quite sure," was Marie's reply.—"You know how ill, how fretted, how unfit for life I have shown myself of late.—Well, when you were gone and I was alone, I thought I would not trouble anybody save one who could tell me what ailed me.—So I went to Dr. Bahrmann. Ask him, if you don't believe me. And he says I must have complete rest."

The name of the man of medicine was one well reputed in Dresden. The Prodigy's

heart felt cold while hearing her—not at the notion of his becoming a father (poor boy! who himself still needed a father's care!)—still less at the idea of going to England unaccompanied by her costly whimsies.—But at this latter suggestion his thoughts honourably rallied back to Becker's sister. "Well, Marie," said he, "if you cannot go with me, I should not, and will not go.—Leave you at such a time—no!"

"O, but, dearest, you must and shall!—Only for a month, and we shall want the money so!—No: ask Dr. Bahrmann whether he thinks the journey would be safe for me. If he does, I will go. I should like" (with a broad smile) "nothing better than to see London. One day we shall together.—If not, the people here are good—and the time will not be yet.—I can improve myself while you are away, possibly."

"Marie, child!" he burst out, on some sudden impulse totally impossible for him to explain to himself, since he would not own that he could not love her—"is this all true?"

"As Heaven is my witness," was her reply.

"Why should you doubt me?—You know I have been always forward enough to be with you wherever you went, and to sit the closest to you whenever you played. Ask Dr. Bahrmann, if you doubt me."

He did not doubt her; but—he did ask Dr. Bahrmann.

That well-esteemed authority was clear and explicit in his replies and counsels. He reminded Charles that there had been insanity in the family of his wife. She had made no secret of it, herself having spoken of her deceased uncle, Chapelmaster Semler;—also of her own inequality of spirits and terrible night-sufferings which her husband had witnessed—and these were points of first importance to be heeded, in avoidance of all excitement at such a hopeful time—so, that thus no good could be effected, but the reverse, by thwarting her in her strongly-expressed wish not to prevent her husband's going to England without her. He undertook to watch over her—to write, if required.—At the time present, her health was delicate.—It might rest with her husband

to say how long it might continue so:—if she was contradicted.

"And so, best-beloved darling, though I hate your Gottlieb, and envy him—O, *how* I envy him!" said Marie Einstern, three days later, embracing Charles as though her heart would live and die out in that embrace—"go to England! Enjoy yourself—humble your own proud family creatures—get fame—get fortune—and don't fall in with that fat Minna Twiese. By the way, I suppose even she would not dare to get there with you, and without *me?*"

"Satisfy yourself," was his answer. "I have never replied to her request—it was too bold. I tore it up into fragments."

"I know you did,—for I made that Gottlieb pick them off the floor for me, and I burnt them.—Farewell! best beloved, and to return!"

The husband went to England—and the wife stayed in Dresden.

CHAPTER V.

COUNTESS BALTAKIS.

If the Count Baltakis, whose liberal offer to Charles Einstern had caused such a derangement of plans in the artist's household at Dresden, was a man whose voice was never heard—the same could not be said of the Count's newly-made wife, whose colloquial powers, it is hoped, are not altogether forgotten by the reader,—and who, by aid of impudence and a bottomless purse, was literally taking the town by storm.

In no other capital save our submissive metropolis would the sovereignty of such a woman have been endured for an hour.

Everybody agreed that Countess Baltakis

was the most insufferable and vulgar woman in London. Every one, nevertheless, went to her parties; every one, on being seen there, declared that she or he was there "only just for once, out of curiosity."

Since the daughter of Israel had displayed herself at Baden, many changes had come over her. She had cast off the faith of her fathers with amazing intrepidity: and with her own face staring at herself in the glass, would talk of "those Jews" with as brave and distant a disdain as the most acrimonious of bleak Christians could have shown. Whether she had embraced the Greek Church in marrying a Greek husband, was less clearly explained.—Neither could people agree from which side had been derived the splendid jewels with which the neck and arms of the already very fat lady were covered, and which (vexatiously enough) there could be no doubt were real. The man of her choice was as fat as herself—a man of no ascertainable age, and as nearly speechless at home as a husband not a mute could be. Their house was a show. Mr. Quillsey, as he said, had flung himself into it

heart and soul: and having barricadoed out any interference with his proceedings (which, to those who knew the lady, seemed the most difficult masterstroke ever accomplished by Mr. Quillsey's genius), and having been granted an unlimited credit—had made it, of its size, the most perfect mansion in Babylon. —Then, the banquets given there habitually, outdoing in splendour, if not in taste, that memorable Royal feast at Caldermere, which shone like a diamond among the crown jewels of Mistress Galatea's memory.—Concerts followed private theatricals, and masked balls concerts, during the season. But throughout banquets, concerts, theatricals, or balls, one thing never ceased—and that was the tongue of Madame Baltakis. Spiteful persons declared (not *to* her, even though they came to her parties) that she was compelled to take three opera-boxes, and reserve the centre one for her own use,—so intolerable was her neighbourhood found to every one bent on hearing music, or telling in his own dark corner his own particular scandal.

By a chance, which every one that knows London will know to be neither fabulous

nor unfrequent, some four or five of the persons who have been already seen in this tale, were among the crowd in the magnificent house of Countess Baltakis, on the occasion of a magnificent concert given by that lady on a certain evening late in May.

"O dear! Lord Chatterton, my poor little necklace are you looking at?—There's nothing worth looking at in it but the red diamond; and *that*, you know . . . I wonder if anybody has a white ruby! or a blue emerald! or a pink turquoise! or a Cuba dog with green eyes! or a love-bird that can talk (Baltakis never utters).—And here comes Lady Caldermere!—Now, isn't she gone off?—Such friends as we were at Baden-Baden."

Lady Caldermere *had* gone off since the Baden-Baden days. "The Royal visit," Mistress Galatea was used to declare, "had been too much for her."—She had been rarely into Blackchester since the Openshaws' return,—never up to the Lower Pavement:—having reached a positive aversion to being talked to about the Prodigy, whom, unjustly, she regarded as the cause of all her

suffering. She was not far from hating Charles: and in proportion as she had lost all power over him, had he gained power and presence in every thought of hers. She was in perpetual dread of some new adventure, some new scandal, which should make her position, with respect to her husband, worse:—and to escape from her misgivings, and the listless misery of her grand life at home, gave herself up to London society: and followed the stream of the curious, who just, for once, drifted into the superb Baltakis house in Grosvenor-square, "to see what the place was like."

"How good of you, Lady Caldermere, to come to us!—and looking so pale and so tired as you do!—London is such a bore just now. Perhaps you don't walk before breakfast? I always do—at the Serpentine as the clock strikes eight. Quite a little *rendezvous* of men there!—Miss Meriden, without your mother!—Admiral Loughton, without your wife, of course.—You'll all find seats in the music-room, good people."

Lady Caldermere passed on;—detained

for a moment. — "Now, if you flirt in the doorway, dear Lady Jenkinson, no living creature will ever get in, through your lovers; and Lady Caldermere is waiting to pass.—O!" (forcing an excruciating glass into her eye,) "here she is at last! Really, when one pays fifty guineas for two songs, singers need not make a favour of coming three-quarters of an hour after the time! Go on, Madame! Never mind saying, 'Good evening.' The pianoforte is in the third drawing-room.—Every one is waiting for you. Lady Lydia, your chair is kept for you—and, while I think of it, don't forget my Thursdays in July. Baltakis has secured Einstern—the great Einstern—for all our four evenings. He was not free a day earlier. Till they are over, he is not to play a note for any other living soul!—the Einstern, you know, that there has been so much talk about! They gave him out to be a natural son of Lady Caldermere's first husband. Wolfy Baron Einstern *had* a natural son—and Lord Caldermere had to contradict the story when the Royal party was down there.

Quite a scene, Major Mackenzie, there was!—Not she! she did not hear!—How late you are, Duchess.—Pray pass on, like a darling."

Lady Caldermere *had* heard, and—it may have been from consideration for Lady Jenkinson's lovers—turned aside into a sort of oriel room, out of the crowd. The place was for the moment empty. She must have fainted had she not sat down—so violent was the shock of the news. Charles coming to England—coming directly!—She had determined that this should not—till she had positively wrought herself into believing that it would not—happen. Should she write and tell Justin? What would that avail her? How exasperated her husband would be at his coming, after all those scandalous stories,—just as if on purpose to brave everybody! And the wife—her daughter-in-law—would she come, too? Madame Baltakis had not spoken of it as a possibility.—She would get out of the way. If Lord Caldermere could only be prevailed on to take her abroad!—He had talked of trying Vichy—or Recoaro was better, because

across the Alps.—But if Lord Caldermere had the slightest idea of what was about to take place—even if under other circumstances she could persuade him—she knew him too well to dream that he would be driven out of the country by any such invasion.—She must face it out as best she might—for that he would not let her go abroad alone, she felt no less terribly certain.—And again, she was seized with the agony of recollecting her utter dependence on him. There was that money in Justin's hands, it was true. . . . She looked up with a start, and caught something in a glass.—It might have been the Face of Caldermere! It was her own! Meanwhile, the incessant voice of Madame Baltakis was heard approaching.

"Nonsense, Quillsey—keeping or no keeping!—I *will* have this room as I like it! I hate your dingy straw colours; and you know I said so, the first moment I set foot in it. I'll have it down; and a blue and gold glass brocade instead, like Lady Sheerness—only richer. Send me some blues on Wednesday,—some rich good blues. . . ."

"Now, dear Countess, with your exquisite

taste—and when every one flatters me by telling me that this oriel is the happiest point in the whole composition—the centre, in fact, on which every other feature depends for its harmony—I do entreat you will not mortify me by destroying what has cost me so much anxious thought!—You know that I had the tint manufactured expressly, to work out my idea—and Lady Sheerness has been dying to have it for her drawing-rooms: it would make, she said, such an exquisitely delicate background to her marbles.—'No, Lady Sheerness,' I said, 'I am *désolé* not to be able to gratify you: but I have pledged myself to the Countess that her *suite* should be unique.'—Ah!—ask Lady Caldermere whether I did as much even for her,—and even when she entertained Royalty.—No, positively, you must not break my heart."

The Baltakis was silenced by the adroit Mr. Quillsey and his allusions to Royalty—but she clung to the secret of her soul, to her blue and gold glass brocade.

"Doctor Mondor is come," said the groom of the chambers, entering in quest of his mistress.

"Come!" screamed that lady. "No, this is too delightful—too unexpected! . . . Lord Stooks, excuse me! . . . Duchess, I'll make my way to you presently. . . . Major Kentucky Browne, I have no time to speak to *you*. Go on, will you?—or you will miss Grisi. Don't be a bore, like all you Americans.—Kitty, dear, I see you!"—And her peacock voice was lost in the confusion of tongues in the outer chamber.

"Now, Lady Caldermere," said the dulcet man of taste, with a shrug perfectly unrivalled in its gentle irony—"I ask you if this is not enough to make a man destroy himself?"

"I always believed that he did destroy himself," was the reply of the absent lady. . . . "I beg your pardon, Mr. Quillsey.—I was thinking of something else. What is it?"

"Why, we know of old that the Hebrews have a preference for what is tawdry.—Her own father's house!" (here Mr. Quillsey indulged in another shrug).—"Bright blue and orange in the drawing-room, and green satin chairs—and a white carpet with pink spots.—And that is what she would like!—

Positively, I should write to the *Times*, if she got her own way.—I should owe it to myself and taste to write to the *Times*."

Mr. Quillsey had seated himself during the progress of his lecture: and not very far from Lady Caldermere.—He saw that she was preoccupied, or he might not have ventured on such a freedom. But to be seen sitting and talking to so very great a lady (what bystander could see that she was not talking to him?), amounted to a step forward. Mr. Quillsey is known to have been somewhat of a getter-on. His promotion was duly observed by another lady and gentleman, who had entered and seated themselves in the shade, at a little distance: and not merely observed, but commented on.

"I think," said Countess Westwood, "I have never seen a more miserable expression of face than Lady Caldermere's."

"I was thinking precisely the same thing," replied her companion—none other than Colonel Vandaleur. "Why does she allow that man to annoy her so? He is only Mr. Quillsey."

"He is not annoying her," spoke the wo-

man's quicker instinct—"I doubt if she is aware of his presence.—Poor lady!—her palace, and her wealth, and her lavish husband, don't make her happy."

"Her palace?"

"Yes—for it is a palace! I don't know anything like it for finish and splendour in England. So laughing a place, too! A young friend of mine who went over it with me not long ago, when they were away, was positive that nobody could possibly have low spirits there.—Have you seen Caldermere?"

"I have not been to Caldermere yet. . . . But I happen to recollect Lady Caldermere before this marriage.—I met her once. . . . Her spirits were high enough, then! How a sister of mine disliked her for her gaiety! To be sure, she had then the Prodigy with her; and on that day in Belgium that boy of hers would have kept the gloomiest of human beings alive."

"O, when we were all at Ostend together,—before I knew you. . . . I recollect her well, and thinking how knowing she was, with all her artless and easy ways."

"That boy of hers was the most lovely

boy, then, I ever saw! How she spoiled him: and he is still marvellously handsome, and natural, and loyal, for one so wretchedly brought up."

"Einstern! O, the pianist! Do you think so?" said the Lady.—"I should not give the same account of him.—I saw him at Munich —on the very night, as it happened, before his strange, discreditable marriage.—Loyal! —Not he, Colonel Vandaleur!—I was present when he met with an old playfellow of his.—They had been in love with each other as boy and girl: and she is now one of the most admirable and handsome women in the world.—I had taken her to Munich expressly that she might hear him play.— And he was barely civil to her. To be sure, one might have expected it—when he was on the eve of carrying off that poor *ballet*-girl, merely because she happened to be the rage among the profligate Russian noblemen. The girl must have been clever, though, to have made him marry her. Madame Baltakis says he is coming to England. . . . I wonder whether he will dare to bring the wife.—If so, I do not wonder at Lady Caldermere's face."

"Nay, dear lady! you are too severe! I must take Einstern's part.—I have not a doubt that, as you say, his wife is clever and designing enough:—but do you know the whole story? Do you know what made him seek her out,—what made him quarrel with what one of those artists would have thought a superb prospect, for her sake?—Gad, Countess! the Russian Princess wanted to marry him!—and she has hundreds of miles of estates—and thousands of slaves—and was the most beautiful girl in St. Petersburg, before that maniac got hold of her and marked her for life."

The Countess Westwood had not heard that Princess Chenzikoff had been in love with Charles:—"And, to say the truth," she added, with the irritation of prejudice, "save for my friend's sake, I do not much care. His brother, if I mistake not, is worth a thousand of him—though he has no genius.—The younger one—that Prodigy—is so thoroughly selfish."

"And what has made him so?—No, no—thoroughly selfish Einstern is not—though I have scolded him sharply for his non-

sense, and am leaving him to himself for a while.—Poor lad! when he recovers his senses . . . . I am sincerely attached to him, —and so I must try to put you right—for I can see you have been misinformed. He married that girl from a wild sense of duty, as I can prove to you." And, though Countess Westwood was unwilling to hear; and, more determined not to believe—and, most of all, resolute not to communicate a single mitigating word to Susanna—she was compelled to listen to the Tübingen story, as told by Colonel Vandaleur.—"Every word of what I got from Einstern," he concluded, "has been confirmed by Doctor Orelius—the clergyman in whose house Charles lived while he was studying in the music-school. He will do his duty by his wife, for her dead brother's sake, I pledge myself:—but I fear that he cannot continue to love her—I can see——"

"Look there!" whispered Countess Westwood, interrupting him hurriedly, and laying her hand on his arm.—The touch had reference to Lady Caldermere.

What did that lady's features tell now?

The terror of one convulsed by the sudden sight of some supernatural vision: who tried to rule herself by an exertion of self-control so tremendous, that it might be doubted, for an instant, whether reason would not give way under the struggle. She was staring at some object behind them.—Neither Countess Westwood nor Colonel Vandaleur dared to turn to see what it was.—It could not be Madame Baltakis, whose shrill and incessant voice nevertheless proclaimed her neighbourhood—and presidence over what (to borrow the speech of London linkmen) was "a noble party."

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