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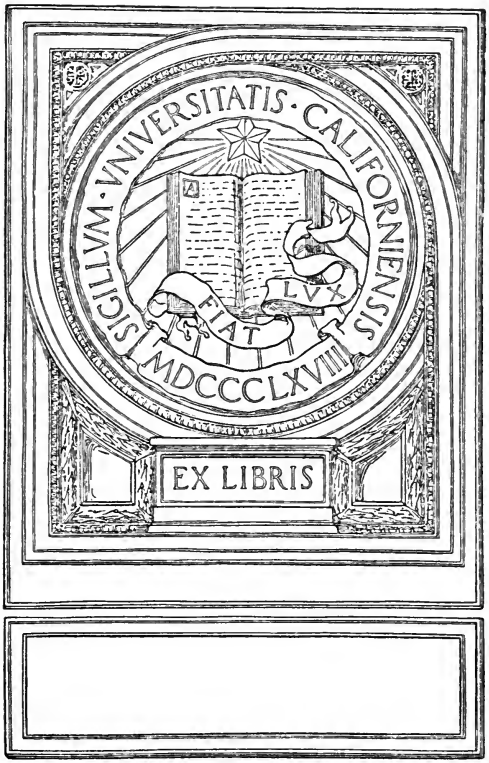

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SKIMMINGS;

OR, A

WINTER AT SCHLOSS HAINFELD,

IN LOWER STYRIA.

BY

CAPTAIN BASIL HALL,
ROYAL NAVY, F. R. S.

PHILADELPHIA:
CAREY, LEA AND BLANCHARD.
1836.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

HAVING on three different occasions made excursions on the Continent, under circumstances of considerable variety, it lately occurred to me that selections from my journals might perhaps be favourably received, either by persons who had never visited the scenes described, or by those who had already seen them, but might choose to view them again through the eyes of another.

I accordingly set to work to skim off such parts of my notes as, either from the buoyancy of the expression, or from retaining a portion of the freshness of original interest, had floated to the surface.

But I soon found these SKIMMINGS accumulate under my hands in much greater quantity than I had anticipated, or than, I feared, might be relished by others.

In this dilemma, I bethought me of the well-known device of the Aeronauts, or Luftschiffer—literally sky-sailors—as the Germans, with their usual pithy quaintness, call them; and resolved to send off a pilot-balloon to ascertain how the wind set.

The following episode was accordingly selected for publication; and if, when let loose, it take the right direction, or, in other words, if it meet with a current of public favour, I may perhaps venture to cut the ropes of the larger work, now in the course of inflation, and trust the whole to the same friendly notice.

PARIS, 20*th May*, 1836.

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SCHLOSS HAINFELD;

OR,

A WINTER IN LOWER STYRIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE INVITATION.

It was a bright sunny morning, near the end of April 1834, when, accompanied by my wife and family, I left Rome for Naples. The climate of the "Eternal City," which is grateful to most constitutions, had not proved so to mine; and, for the first time in my life, I had fallen into low spirits, and indolent habits. The endless ruins of ancient Rome—the wonders of the Vatican—the forest of churches—the gorgeous palaces—even the great Colosseum itself, and almost St. Peter's, one by one, had faded into indifference before my languid observation. This was not health; and my physician, who had much experience of the Roman climate,—so fair and treacherous,—declared, that nothing would do me any good but change of air.

Never was learned opinion so quickly verified. At first starting, the warm sun and the clear sky had no charms for me. And this strange feeling, which admitted the good, but felt only the gloom, so long as I continued in the immediate vicinity of Rome, gradually, but perceptibly, began to evaporate as the carriage ascended the gentle slope of the ancient volcanic mountain of Albano. By the time we had gained the height of several hundred feet above the dome of St. Peter's, judging from its ap-

pearance in the distance, I felt as if a load were taken off my lungs, and the nice mechanism which gives activity to the breath, and keeps up the flame of life, was once more free to move. I became enchanted with the blueness of the sky—the sharpness of the lights and shades; and as the gentle puffs of wind crossed our path, I caught myself stretching forward to inhale their new and invigorating freshness. Long before reaching Albano, which stands, I should suppose, about a thousand feet above the level of the Tiber, I became so hungry and happy, that had not some traces of rheumatism tied me by the leg, I should infallibly have leaped from the carriage, and scampered up the hill before the party to order dinner. On arriving at Albano, new objects of interest met our view. Our windows looked full on the open sea—the beautiful, the classical Mediterranean—nowhere, except at Naples, so fertile in associations as near the coast we now looked upon. The beach might be distant about ten or twelve miles; and between us and the sea lay a broad flat belt of alluvial, marshy soil, scantily cultivated, and only here and there dotted with a bright, white cottage. Nearer, and where the land gradually rose towards the volcanic focus, the scenery partook of a more fertile and varied character; being not only cast into all sorts of shapes by the freaks of ancient earthquakes and eruptions of lava, but covered with villas, gardens, vineyards, and olive orchards, every where glowing with the astonishing verdure of an Italian spring.

Peeping through the foliage we could perceive many remnants of ancient buildings, which greatly contributed to characterize the scene. Some of these maintained more or less their old shape of towers and arches—others merely showed, by huge piles of brick and sculptured blocks of marble, what they might have been. Far off to the left, along the shore, in the south-eastern direction, we could just distinguish the island of Ponzo, and still farther off, we were told might be seen, in days of peculiar clearness, the island of Ischia, which forms the northern horn of the Bay of Naples.

Our admiration of this beautiful prospect was interrupt-

ed by the necessity of attending to the arrangements of the journey. As we travelled veturino, we had to stop for a couple of hours at Albano; during which time sundry other carriages arrived, and either passed on smartly with post horses, or stopped to take rest as we had done. Amongst these there was one which particularly engaged our attention; and with that sort of feverish curiosity which proverbially belongs to travelling, I set about trying to discover who the people were with whose appearance we had been struck. Great was our pleasure on learning that here was no other than our amiable and accomplished Polish friend, with an unpronounceable name, the Countess Rzewuska. We lost no time in repairing to her apartment to renew so agreeable an acquaintance, though it was but for a moment; for it appeared we were passing on opposite tacks, as she was coming from Naples, and we from Rome. No sooner had we entered than she exclaimed—

"Oh how fortunate! It is only a day or two since I received a letter from Germany, containing a message to you; and had we not now fallen in with each other, I might never have been able to deliver it. My correspondent supposed we were still at Rome together, forgetting that at this season the travellers who crowd there in winter, scatter themselves in all directions, the moment the breath of Spring opens the season. This letter," continued she, pulling one from her reticule, "contains a message from the Countess Purgstall, an elderly Scotch lady, who, having married forty years ago a nobleman of Austria, has resided in that country ever since. I am desired to ascertain if you be the son of Sir James Hall, one of her earliest and most intimate friends in Edinburgh? And if so, as I believe to be the case, I am requested to invite you, in her name, most cordially, to pay her a visit at her country place, the Schloss, or castle, of Hainfeld, near Gratz, should you think of taking the homeward route through Styria, instead of following the beaten track of the Tyrol."

It was impossible such an invitation could have been given to travellers less hampered by plans; for we made

it a constant rule to be guided by circumstances as they arose, and not to entangle ourselves by previous arrangements which might or might not prove suitable when the time came. Thus, the map of Europe was always before us, where to choose our place of rest, or rather unrest, and Mrs. Starke our guide. Having looked at the various routes, studied them, and made our calculations as to time and place, we came to the resolution that, provided we received, in due season, a somewhat more specific invitation, it might be no bad sport to visit a German castle, as something fresh, and out of the ordinary course of jog-trot travelling. In order to prevent all mistakes, I thought it best to communicate at once with the lady herself.

I accordingly wrote a letter, mentioning the number of which our party consisted, giving a sketch of our plans for the summer, and requesting farther information about roads, and the best seasons for travelling in Germany.

To this letter I received two answers, the second being written under an erroneous impression that the first was misdirected; and as there are several parts of these letters which help to elucidate the character of our future hostess, I shall venture to make free extracts from both. As yet our purpose of paying her a visit was quite undecided; but we felt our interest in the project, and our curiosity as to the character and situation of our distant and unseen friend, greatly heightened by these communications. I should mention, that all we knew of the Countess Purgstall was, that she was sister to Mrs. Dugald Stewart, widow of the celebrated writer on moral philosophy; that she had married a German nobleman, late in the last century, and proceeded with him to Austria, and that she had never revisited her native country. We had also a vague recollection of having heard that she had been extremely unfortunate in her family, and was left solitary in the world; moreover, that she was remarkably clever, and rather eccentric. But we formed no just conception of this extraordinary person from any such glimpses of character as these letters, or other accounts afforded us. On reading them now, it is true, when familiar with the whole topic, we can discover many touches which might

have given us some insight into a matter which eventually interested us a great deal more sincerely and deeply than we could at first have supposed possible. The Countess's first letter ran thus—it was dated 7th May, Hainfeld:—

"I have this moment, my dear sir, received your letter, dated Albano, 21st April. I am now so unaccustomed to a pleasing sensation, that I tremble while I tell you, it will be doing me a very great favour indeed if Mrs. Hall and you will bestow a visit upon me. Your little darlings surely need repose. I beseech you to let them find a home for a few weeks in Hainfeld; the house is large; there are thirty-nine rooms on this floor all completely furnished, though in the mode of the last cantury; the air and water are good; the country is rich, well cultivated, and varied enough to be pleasing. I dare not promise you amusements; I am a widowed woman cut off from the tree of life; but if a cordial welcome can render solitude supportable, I am sure you will find it here. Hungary is only three hours distant from this—it is a country little known. You will be well received by my neighbours on the frontier, and find the people a race distinct from any in Europe.

"As to this road, I can assure you it is excellent—in every respect preferable to the one by Tyrol. The first English travellers by accident took the road by Tyrol; this made it the fashion, and ever since they have flown that way like a flock of birds. The Alps and lakes of Styria are fully as interesting as those in Tyrol, and as yet unknown to the English, and Gratz is not inferior to Innspruck. Besides, you can have an advantage in taking this road I am sure you will know to value—it is to be acquainted with the Archduke John, who lives in a quiet, simple style at his iron works, and will receive you with pleasure. He is wonderfully well informed; has vast practical knowledge, and his manners are truly pleasing. As a man he has few equals—as a prince he is a phenomenon.

* * * * * *

"I dare not speak of the home of my youth. Thirty-

five years of absence have spunged me from the remembrance of those dearest to me; but if you graciously visit me, you will draw back the veil and give me a glimpse of things still, alas! too dear to me.

"If you will write me a note and let me know when I dare hope to see you, it will be a great pleasure to me. The Governor of Milan, Count Hardegg, will please you much, and also our countryman, General Count Nugent, at Trieste. I fear to lose a post, and send you these hurried lines, praying you to believe me your truly obliged, and I trust soon to say grateful friend,

"C.* PURGSTALL."

The second letter is fuller, and still more characteristic.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"With a grief which I cannot express, I discovered a few minutes ago, on looking over the little register of my letters, that I had addressed my answer to yours not to Rome, but to Naples. It was a degree of absence worthy of your good grand uncle, of absent memory; but I have not, alas! the apology of genius to plead. My mistakes are owing to a very different cause of late—to the state of my health. For more than three years I have been the victim of rheumatism, or what some physicians are pleased to call the *tic-douloureux-volant*. This cruel disease has torn my nerves in pieces, and when I am agitated, as I was when I received your letter—so dearly welcome to me—I became quite confused. Pardon, my dear sir, my seeming delay in answering your letter. I wrote instantly, but my silly letter is literally *poste restante* in Naples. I hope these lines will reach you safely, and convince Mrs. Hall and you how unfeignedly happy I shall be to see you and your little darlings. It will indeed be most gratifying to me if you will allow the infants to repose here for a few weeks, and find in Hainfeld the quiet of home. Your ex-

* It may be right to explain that this C. stands for Countess, and not for the initial of a Christian name, hers being J. A. It is a general custom on the continent for persons of rank to write their title as a part of the signature.

cellent Scotch nurserymaid will revive me with letting me hear once more the language of my heart. She shall arrange all here exactly as she wishes, and, I trust, make the dear children comfortable. The house is very large; there are thirty-nine rooms on this floor. Not only your family, but any friends you choose to bring along with you, can find place enough. The country is truly healthy; the soil rich and well cultivated, and the hills and distant mountains covered with forests. The people resemble their oxen—they are diligent and docile. There are few neighbours, except in Hungary (three hours' distance from this); and Hungary is a country little known and deserving your attention. Styria is also a country little known, owing to the singular fancy or fashion of the English always to fly between Vienna and Italy, by the way of Tyrol. Kotzebue says, 'The English carry their prejudices, as they do their tea-kettles, all over the world with them.' This, in general, is merely an impertinence; but in what respects the Tyrol road, it holds true; our road is in many respects preferable.

"You inquire as to the state of the roads. They are excellent. The Eilwagen, a kind of diligence, takes regularly fifty-five hours between Trieste and Gratz, and twenty-five hours between Gratz and Vienna. As man and beast in Austria move discreetly, this, with the aid of your post-map, will show you the true state of the roads.

"The tenure of property in this country is very different from the English; and I would fain, were it possible, excite your curiosity as to Styria. The constitution of the American States interested you. Why should not ours do so? The country is divided into circles; mine contains 4200 souls. My bailiff collects all the taxes within the circle; manages the conscription; the police; the criminal justice in the first instance, the property of minors, &c., &c. He must have passed his trials as an advocate, and I must pay him and his assistants, or what is called my chancery. I defy the public affairs, in as far as this goes, to cost less to a government. The said bailiff also collects the dominical, or what is due to me, and manages the landed property, which, as we have no farming, is kept, according to

the Scotch phrase, in our own hands. The first crop of hay was housed yesterday, so if you travel with your own horses, good food is ready for them. After the wheat and rye are cut down, buck-wheat is sown, which can ripen even under the snow. It is the food of the peasantry, as oatmeal was formerly of the Scotch Highlanders; but the crop from the best ground is sold off to pay the very high taxes. The people are good and docile. The noblesse, owing to the dreadful war, &c., are mostly on short commons. We have *no* poor, which, owing to the question in England respecting the poor-laws, is deserving of being noticed. No man is allowed to marry till he can prove he is able to maintain a wife and children; and this, with the law of celibacy of the clergy, and the caution required of the military*—almost an act of celibacy—are checks on population, which would make the hearts of Mr. Malthus and Miss Martineau burn within them for admiration. The result is, the entire demoralizing of the people. The mask of religion helps nothing. At the last grand jubilee, in the next parish, seventy-two pairs of virgins adorned the procession, dressed in white, and covered with garlands of flowers. In eight months forty-four of them were in the family way. Madame Nature is not a political economist, and she does not let her laws be outraged with impunity.

"As another motive to visit Styria, there is a physician at St. Gothard, three hours from this, who works all the miracles ever wrought, except raising the dead. Were I not virtually dead, I would consult him. He is a Homœopathic; forty-nine thousand sick have been with him since November, and all believe in his infallibility. The Alleopathic school endeavour to suffocate the system of Hanneman, but in vain. A question of such consequence to the human race, and so easily decided on the spot, is surely deserving of your investigation.

"I am ashamed to send you so tedious a scrawl, but you will pardon me, for you know it is out of the abundance

* No officer in the Austrian army is allowed to marry, unless he previously deposites a sum of money in the hands of Government for the maintenance of his widow and children in the event of his death. The sum varies with the rank of the officer.—B. H.

of the heart the mouth speaketh. May I trust you will induce Mrs. Hall to 'unfatigue' herself and her little angels, in this Tadmore in the wilderness? I have nothing, alas! to offer you all but my hearty welcome. God knows it is sincere. In haste, for I fear to lose a post. I bid you, my dear sir, farewell.—11th June. My address is simply *Gratz*. N. B. There is a respectable library here."

These letters very nearly made us decide to take Styria in our way to the North, but we had still much to see in Italy, and elsewhere. It is not my present purpose, however, to enter upon these adventures, though some of them proved highly interesting. The following answer which I sent to the Countess's pressing invitation, will suffice to show what we were about, and in what mind we looked forward to the proposed visit.

"*Naples, 7th July*, 1834.

"My Dear Madam,

"You need have no further remorse of conscience about the address of your letters, as both of them reached me in safety. In my turn I must apologize and explain the reason of this tardy reply. We have been absent from Naples on a cruise to Sicily and Malta, in a vessel of this place, hired expressly for the voyage; and although we have returned more than a week, we have not yet come to such a fixed arrangement for our future plans as to enable us to say, with much precision, at what period we shall be in your neighbourhood. In the mean time, I must no longer delay writing in my own name, and that of Mrs. Hall, to thank you for your kindness and attention, and to say that we shall be most happy to avail ourselves of your hospitable invitation on our way north, if we can possibly arrange to do so. We are at present busily employed in 'seeing up' or 'demolishing' Naples and its beautiful *contorni;* but, in the course of this month, or, as the Indian ships say, 'in all July,' we hope to complete our sight-seeing labours. It is probable that towards the middle of September we shall be advancing upon your castle. As the

time draws nearer, however, I shall give you due notice of our approach. Our party will not occupy more than three or four of the three dozen apartments which you speak of, and I have no doubt we shall all greatly enjoy our visit.

"I shall endeavour to profit also by your advice with respect to Styria ; indeed, we have no especial love for the Tyrol, and should only have followed the beaten Cockney route, from having generally observed that the said Cockney, somehow, almost always finds out the things best worth seeing. Your local authority in this matter, however, will certainly guide us, unless unforeseen circumstances carry us too far out of the way. For my part, I have always so much difficulty in acquiring correct geographical ideas with respect to any country I have not visited, that I can seldom decide which route it is best to take, till the country in question is near at hand. By the time we reach Venice, we shall be better instructed on many such points, and it will certainly be no small comfort to see something *new* on the continent. It is true I am not writing a book ; but I often sigh for some bit of grouud to tread upon which has not been ploughed up by the merciless pens of preceding travellers. In this poor exhausted Italy, countless classical scholars, men of wit and fancy, blues, Roman Catholics, Protestants, poets, painters, and philosophers, with ten thousand others, of all persuasions, capacities, politics, tastes, and experiences have worried and scourged the land till it will scarcely bear a blade of decent grass, or even a thistle for any stray donkey that may be passing. But your account of Styria does stir up my inkhorn ; and if I don't make a quarto out of it, the fault is mine !

"Seriously, I shall be very glad to see the state of manners you allude to, and I look forward with pleasure to our meeting in the castle of Hainfeld, there, as you say, to 'unfatigue' ourselves; a process very suitable, I assure you, after the toils of sight-seeing in the south of Italy at midsummer, more especially as old Vesuvius is now in full eruption, and his sides streaked with fiery torrents.

* * * * * *

"I feel flattered and gratified by the favourable opinion expressed by your neighbour of the work I wrote on America. I have had, in my day, my share of abuse; and very well pleased I was with such notice. When an author takes any particular line, especially in politics, he ought to consider the censure of those he is entirely opposed to, as the best acknowledgment that he has not missed his intended point—that he has not mistated his own views. For the rest, he must be content with the approbation of one or two judicious friends, merely to satisfy him that he has not, in his zeal, done harm instead of good to the cause he wishes to defend."

To this letter I received the following answer when at the delicious Baths of Lucca, the most delightful summer residence in all Italy. There are so many traits, explanatory more or less of the peculiarities of our future hostess, scattered up and down these letters, which will assist in introducing her to the reader's acquaintance much better than I could do myself, that I venture to give them almost entire. They will show also how great her anxiety was to engage us, at all hazards, to come to her, and thus serve to explain subsequent passages in the curious history of our intercourse.

"12*th August.*

"My Dear Sir,—I had the happiness of receiving your letter of the 7th July, in course; and a few minutes ago, your second dear letter, dated the 26th. It was only my fear of teazing you with my scribble-scrabbles, as Winifred Jenkins would call them, that prevented me from answering the first directly. Mrs. Hall and you knew, I thought, my sincere wishes, and had promised to bestow on me the long-wished-for enjoyment of hearing once more the language of my heart. I hoped, and still hope, you will find repose agreeable, particularly for your little darlings, after such long and fatiguing wanderings. I have been very anxious on their account, for the heat this summer is unexampled, and for infants it is dangerous.

Even here the thermometer of Reaumur was at 31° in the shade, or 102° of Fahrenheit.

"Tyrol is certainly worth seeing, particularly for cockneys who never saw a mountain; but as no one of them, by any accident, ever took the Styrian road, they could form no judgment on the subject. Gratz, though a town of no consequence, has finer environs than any town I know, Florence excepted; and it has a merit which, luckily for its inhabitants, has not been discovered by the English, who are on the saving establishment—it is the cheapest place to live at in Europe.

"The Archduke John has founded a museum at Gratz, the geological specimens of which, mostly collected by himself, will give you a just idea of the bones of our country. My horses shall be in waiting as soon as you tell me the day and the number necessary to conduct you safely to poor desolate Hainfeld, and any friends of yours shall be *heartily* welcome; only I pray you to prepare them for our half-savage state of existence. Vulgar meat and drink in plenty, and an undiscovered country, is all they dare expect. I am sure Venice will be very interesting to you. I used to consider a fine ship under sail as the proudest work man could boast of; but when one sees this city of palaces sitting on the sea, and smiling at the waves in their fury, every other wonder of the world is annihilated. Its rapid destruction is saddening.—If it is painful to see a once-lovely woman becoming decrepid, what is it to see Venice sinking into its watery grave?

"You do perfectly well to go by steam, for you can sup at Venice, and breakfast at Trieste. The coast-road is very tedious, and there are often bad fevers about. I am sure you will like the commander-in-chief at Trieste, Count Nugent, also Mr. Thomas Thomson Hay, a first-rate merchant there, who, from his kind attention to me, I am certain must be a good man. He will give you better information respecting the commerce, &c., of Trieste, than those who govern there. At Adelsberg, three posts on this side of Trieste, there is a vast cavern, which, when illuminated, is, they say, magnificent. A singular kind of fishes is found in a stream that runs through these caves.

They have a comb on their heads like that of a cock; they have *no* eyes, yet, when exposed to the light, they seem to suffer. Near Adelsberg, but about a post off the road, is a lake called the Cirknitzer See. By means of five or six tunnels, the water leaves it once in the year, and it is possible to cut down corn, hunt, and fish on the same ground, during the same season! When the waters return, they bring a number of fish, often from six to eight pounds weight, out of their subterranean abode.

"At Laybach, two roads part for Gratz—they are equally good; but that by Cilly is twelve posts; the other, by Klagenfurt and Upper Styria, is nineteen posts; and by this road one sees mountains, brothers and sisters to the Tyrolese; and those who love them can satisfy the sentiment. The great iron-works of Vordernberg, where the Archduke John resides, are about a post from Leoben. The country from Bruck to Gratz is extremely romantic. Your late arrival, alas! will only show you the nakedness of the land, though autumn, as it retires, may still, as Sir Walter expresses it, leave 'its mantle's fold' on the forests; but 'the shroud of russet dropped with gold,' is a poor indemnity for the summer's beauty you have left behind you. All things pass!

* * * * * *

"I am ashamed of so tedious a letter. During the thirty-six years I have lived in this country, I have forgotten, in a great degree, English; and I see so many new words in a Review Mr. Hay lent me a few days ago, they quite confuse my poor head. It is a dreadful fate to survive all one lived for, as I have done,—even the language of my mother country. My spirits are failing me to-day, and the very flies will not allow me to write; they nestle between my spectacles and my eyes, and torment me. I pray write soon, my dear sir."

There was one thing about this letter which puzzled us a good deal, especially when we came near the spots she describes, and the routes which we had to choose amongst, after landing at Trieste. While she enumerates several objects of interest which lay in our way, she omits all

mention, or even allusion to the great quicksilver mine of Idria, the second in importance of its kind in the world, as I learned lately in a conversation with Humboldt. At all events, as it is by far the most curious thing, and best worth seeing, in that part of the country, we failed not to visit it in passing. But it was not till long afterwards that I ascertained that the good old Countess had purposely avoided mentioning Idria, in the hope that we should pass it without examination. It seems she had learned that the miners employed in handling the quicksilver are liable to various diseases; and she took it into her head, that, as our curiosity might tempt us to explore pretty deeply into the mine, and to touch the specimens of the earths and ores containing the insidious poison of this extraordinary metal, we might become ill and die, or, at all events, be detained before reaching her! Now, as her every thought and feeling was occupied at that moment in making out this grand point, she saw nothing unreasonable in concealing from us, so far as she could, even an object of such surpassing interest as the mines of Idria.

Before reaching Hainfeld, however, we kept up a tolerably active correspondence. In answer to hers of the 12th August, I wrote a rather free and easy epistle, to which there speedily came an answer, which showed that so far we had not mistaken the good old lady's character. Her increasing and almost feverish anxiety to draw us into her castle, is well shown in the following letter:—

"*September the 6th.*—The thermometer of Reaumur is now at 27° (92¼°, Fahrenheit,) not a drop of rain falls, so all is burnt up. Water fails every where, but here it is good and enough.

"I had last night, my dear sir, the pleasure to receive your thrice welcome letter. I cannot express how proud and happy I shall be if I can induce you to undertake a voyage of discovery into this our terra incognita. As I write very unintelligibly, I have desired my bailiff to trace the roads from Trieste to Gratz after a map, with the name of each post, and a cross at the houses where it is fittest to sleep at. The inns in Germany are less like the

Italian than the old Scotch ones. The first mark is at Adelsberg, a short day's journey; but I thought you would like to explore the vast cavern and the little fishes there. If any thing fails you, speak with the captain of the circle, Compte Brandais, in my name. His angel of a wife was dear to me from her infancy, but she died so lately I cannot write to him.

"There is no country so full of strange caverns and underground rivers, as the one you will pass through. One of the rivers comes above ground, full grown, near Laybach. Jason and his Argonauts passed the winter in Laybach. In the spring they took their ship to pieces and carried it to the sea. You will laugh at this, but our antiquarians will give you irrefragable authority for it. You will see by the marks I am extremely glad you prefer the shortest road to Gratz. It is the decision of wisdom, and I have no doubt you will find her ways are pleasantness. Your darlings will, I am sure, be perfectly safe under the care of their German governess, who, I trust, will find herself perfectly at home; while your precious Scotch nursery maid and I will understand one another famously. Such a person as she is ceases to be a servant, she is a friend. She can dine with Mr. and Mrs. Bailiff, or where she wills.

* * * * * *

"I must warn you about the custom-houses—they are one of our plagues. The money you need on the road are pieces of twenty kreutzers, with what is called good and bad paper money. Ten florins good make twenty-five bad. In all Germany the English are considered as fair game, particularly in the inns. Our innkeepers do not dispute, like the Italians, for the character of the people is reserved; and they will not come down a farthing in their bills. It is marked on your map whether the stages are single or double posts, and I have always seen the driver paid as one horse; but unless they are contented they drive slowly, and the loss of time and the expense of the inns is more than the difference. If you will have the goodness to write me a line on arriving at Trieste, the horses shall be sent to Gratz to wait for you.

"Hainfeld is about six hours from Gratz. Your sweet infants will be sadly disappointed when, instead of a splendid dwelling, they see a building like a manufactory; the grounds in culture to the door, and the cows lodged within a gunshot of their bed-chamber. At first they will be afraid of me, for I am now like nothing they ever saw, except the picture of Mademoiselle Endor in an old family Bible. Alas! the ravages of time are equally visible on its possessor, and upon poor desolate Hainfeld! Farewell."

CHAPTER II.

THE SCHLOSS.

When we hear of a German castle, our imaginations represent to us a huge dark looking fabric, on the edge of a frowning precipice, and wellnigh hid in the shade of forests, some centuries older than the building which has long outlived the fame of him who raised it. Accordingly, as we drove along from Gratz, we pleased our fancy by speculating on the wild scenery of our friend's mansion, which, from the grandeur of the neighbourhood of Gratz, we felt fairly entitled to expect, would not belie the romantic character which belongs to such spots.

We had, it is true, seen drawings of Hainfeld, but almost all drawings tell such lies, that there is no believing them when they speak truth. It is indeed part of an artist's confession of faith, to avow his love for the imaginative, over what he is pleased to call the vulgar reality; and sooth to say, these gentlemen generally take good care, that if there be any vulgarity in their nominal representations, it shall not consist in too close a resemblance to the things represented.

Be this as it may, we had formed no very correct notion of the place we were going to, and strained our eyes with

some anxiety in the direction pointed out by the Countess's coachman, as we wound our way amongst the hills, eager to catch a sight of the castle before the daylight had quite ebbed away. Nothing, however, could we see in the smallest degree like a castle, even when the hills spread themselves out into a broad, flat, richly cultivated valley, with a small sluggish stream, the Raab, stealing its way along the middle of the bottom land, or haugh, where its course was indicated by a double line of willows, alders, and other thirsty trees, the only embellishments of this kind which the thrift of the farmers had left in the centre of the landscape.

At length four little sharp turrets, indicating the four corners of the long-looked-for Schloss, or castle, came in sight, and presently afterwards, the whole building which, to do its looks no injustice, and in the words of its proprietor, resembled nothing so much as a manufactory. Instead of standing boldly on the top of a high rock, the family mansion of the Purgstalls was placed in the flattest part of a flat valley, far from the abundant trees and rich scenery of the adjacent high grounds, as if in utter contempt of the many picturesque situations which might have been selected on the same property.

As we drove under the old archway which admitted us to the quadrangle in the interior, we might have fancied we had entered the court of a Spanish or Portuguese convent. There was just light enough to show us the corridor on each of the four sides, arched all along and open to the sky, with a row of doors leading to what in a convent would be the cells, but which here were of course much larger apartments. A worse description of architecture for so rigorous a climate as that of Germany could not well be imagined, and we learned afterwards, that it had been introduced by an Italian architect who saw the country only in summer. The natives of the day, having little or no acquaintance with other countries, and no great ingenuity of their own, quietly adopted the fashion, to the permanent discomfort of themselves and of all succeeding generations.

Two of the corners of the quadrangle were filled with

broad staircases by which the corridor was gained, and at the bottom of one of these we were received by the Countess's head servant, who welcomed us with the air of a cordial landlord, and even reproached us good-humouredly for our delay, by saying they had all been anxiously looking out for us several days. "But better late than never," added he, in a dialect between Italian and French —for he was a Piedmontese; and having been a soldier of Napoleon's, had seen the world, and learned many languages. In one of these, I forget which, he then begged to know if we should prefer being shown to our own suite of apartments, or at once to the reception room of the Countess. Of course we preferred paying our duty without delay to the mistress of the mansion; and, therefore, though covered with dust, and rigged in our well-worn travelling garments, we begged to be introduced forthwith.

If our curiosity as to the castle was great, much greater was our curiosity respecting its proprietor. Neither were our imaginary conceptions of our hostess much more accurate than those we had formed of the Schloss itself. All that we had heard, had prepared us for something out of the common; and as we approached the spot, some curious circumstances came to our knowledge. At Trieste, for instance, on inquiring whether there was any chance of the Countess being absent, we were told with a smile, that this was not very likely, as the old lady never quitted her bed. And in a letter which I found lying for me at Gratz, she begged me to warn the children of her helpless situation. In one of her letters, she said she was like nothing in the world but a mummy,—adding, "for the last three weeks, a very sick one;" and truth bids me avow that our excellent hostess did not look the character amiss. "What a pleasant thing would it not be," said the Countess one day, "could we put life into a mummy, and make it tell us about the Ptolemies, and their Pyramids and Hieroglyphics?" Yet I question if we did not find it even more interesting to hear an intelligent old person like the Countess Purgstall speak, from personal

knowledge, of many of the most eminent characters of the last century with whom we had far closer sympathies.

Be this as it may, we found our aged friend as we had been told to expect, in a huge antiquated bed, with faded damask curtains, in a room feebly lighted, and furnished in the style of a hundred years ago. Her wasted form was supported by half a dozen pillows of different shapes and sizes, and every thing about her wore the appearance of weakness and pain. Every thing, I should say, except her voice, expression of countenance, and manners, in none of which could be traced any symptom of decay or weakness. Still less might any feebleness be detected in what she said, for nothing in the world could be more animated or more cordial than her welcome. She shook hands with each of us, as if she had known us all our lives, and expressed over and over again her joy at having succeeded in bringing us to her castle.

"You must be sadly tired, however," she said, "and the children must be almost ready for their beds, so pray show that you feel at home by selecting the rooms which suit you best. There are enough of them I trust; and presently, the dinner which has been ready for you an hour or two will be served up."

Off we set, under charge of the Major-Domo, Joseph, who, in obedience to the magnificent orders of his hospitable mistress, had lighted the stoves in three times the number of apartments we could by possibility occupy, in order, as he said, that we might pick and choose. In most old castles which I have seen, the rooms are small and comfortless, but in Hainfeld, they were large and commodious; and though the furniture was not abundant, or at least not so superabundant as in modern mansions, it was all good and even elegant in its old fashioned heavy way.

In the principal room, which had been prepared for us, and which was the best in the castle, there stood, in rather tottering condition, a handsomely got up bed, at least eight feet wide, furnished with crimsoned silk curtains, bordered with silver lace two or three inches broad, surmounted by a massive carved cornice, fringed with silver tracery, in the same taste as a rich but heavy em-

broidery which figured at the head of the bed. In like manner the walls were hung with crimson satin; and round the room were placed old fashioned sofas with curling backs, and arms like dolphin's tails, embossed in gold, and all padded with elastic cushions wrought in flowers. Fancifully carved writing tables, supported by not less fantastically shaped legs, with snug places for the feet to rest upon, stood here and there. Bureaus, chests of drawers, and queer looking toilet tables groaning under the weight of huge mirrors, completed the furniture. Of course there were plenty of chairs—heavy old fellows, with high puffy seats, cane backs, and whirligig arms, comfortable enough to sit upon, but not easily moved from place to place. Most of the rooms were ornamented with grotesque work in plaster, in high relief, on the roofs; and such of the walls as were not hung with hideous staring antediluvian family portraits, were painted in fresco, with battle pieces, hunting scenes, and other embellishments in the same luxurious but antiquated taste.

I must not omit to mention one important article of furniture, which was found in every room in the castle, high and low, namely, an enormous porcelain stove, white and highly glazed, reaching almost to the ceiling, in a succession of handsome stories, not unlike some Chinese pagodas I have seen in other climes. The fire is introduced into these vast ovens, as they are well called in German, not by an opening into the room, but by a door which opens into the corridor. Early in the morning, a large wood fire is lighted in each stove, and such is their mass, that long after the fire has burned out, the heat is retained, and the apartment kept warm till the evening, when another heating is given it which suffices for the night. In a climate of great severity, such means of heating rooms are said to be indispensable; but to English tastes, accustomed to the cheerfulness of an open fire, and not at all accustomed to the close heated air of a German stove, the fashion is one which it requires a long experience to render tolerable. Madame de Staël wittily says, "that the Germans live in an atmosphere of beer, stoves,

and tobacco;" and truly, the more one sees of the country, the less exaggerated does this sarcasm appear. The annoyance of beer one may sometimes escape, but the misery of tobacco smoke and choky stoves is inevitable.

CHAPTER III.

THE COUNTESS.

Miss Jane Anne Cranstoun was born in Scotland about the year 1760, of a noble family, both by the father's and the mother's side; and she enjoyed likewise the advantage of being allied to the aristocracy of talent, by the marriage of her sister with the celebrated Dugald Stewart. Her own abilities an attainments improved these advantages, and won for her early in life the intimate friendship of Sir Walter Scott; and long before he was known to the public, she had discovered the secret of that wonderful mine of intellectual gold, which has become in our day the established currency of fashionable literature in every part of the civilized world. In the latter stages of our acquaintance with her, we came upon some curious circumstances connected with this intimacy, which shall be touched upon in due season. In the mean time I may mention, that we made out almost to demonstration, that one of the most original and spirited of all his female characters, no less a personage than Die Vernon must have been sketched from this very lady.

In the year 1797, Miss Cranstoun married Count Purgstall, a German nobleman of the highest family in Austria, with whom she proceeded to Lower Styria, where his large estates lay; and she never afterwards returned to her native country. During the fierce wars which Napoleon waged with Austria, her husband served in the army in posts of distinction, until, towards the close of those disastrous periods, he was taken prisoner under circumstances

so peculiarly distressing, that his health gave way, and after in vain trying the climate of Italy, he died in 1811. Madame Purgstall was now left with an only child, a son, who lived only a few years after his father's death. No sooner was he gone, than upwards of seventy claimants as heirs-at-law pounced on the noble estates of the ancient family of Purgstall, and the poor desolate widow had enough to do to establish her right even to that portion of the property which had been settled upon her. The difficulties she encountered in arranging these matters, and the severe distress to which she was reduced by innumerable and apparently interminable lawsuits, might have broken the spirit and wearied out the resolution of a less vigorous mind. With all her fortitude, indeed, she seems to have been almost subdued; and but for the generous assistance of the late Lord Ashburton, a near connexion of hers, she must in all probability have sunk under the joint weight of poverty and law proceedings.

She was now, by these successive bereavements, left quite alone in a foreign land; and having lost every being who was dear to her, she appears to have had scarcely any other object while she remained in the world, but to cherish the remembrance of those who were gone—to feed her grief, in short, rather than to overcome it. In this spirit, accordingly, she permitted nothing to be changed in the castle. Every article of furniture stood exactly in its old place—not a walk amongst the grounds was altered —not a tree cut down—not a book shifted in the library. So that the castle of Hainfeld and all its old inmates, all its old usages, went on, or rather went not on, but remained as if arrested by the frost of its mistress's grief, in the very position they occupied at the period of that last and crowning disaster, her son's death, which obliterated the house of Purgstall.

In former times, we were told, the Countess had been the gayest of the gay, and the most active person in the country, both in body and mind. But she soon sunk into a state of inactivity; and by considering it a kind of duty to those she had lost, to make the worst of things, instead of making the best of them, she greatly aggravated the

hopeless and forlorn nature of her situation. One of the effects of this indiscreet course of mental discipline was to undermine a constitution naturally robust; and presently, in addition to her other misfortunes, gout, rheumatism, and tic doulourеux, with other inward and painful complaints, took their turns to torment her. Amongst the strange fancies which formed part of her singularly constituted mind, was a firm persuasion that all medical assistance was useless in her case, and indeed, in most cases; and thus, unquestionably, she allowed some of the diseases which preyed upon her to acquire a much greater head than they might have done had they been treated "secundum artem." Be this as it may, she presented to the eye a miserable spectacle of bodily suffering and bodily decay; but these were probably rendered more conspicuous from the undiminished vigour of her intellects—the freshness and even vivacity of her disposition—the uniform suavity of her temper, and the lively interest which, in spite of herself, as it should seem, and her resolution to be unhappy, she continued to take in the concerns of the external world.

I should have mentioned, that at the time we first saw the Countess, she had been confined to bed three whole years—to the very bed on which her son had expired seventeen years before; and from which, as she said with too much appearance of truth, she herself could never hope to rise again. Fortunately, her complaints had not attacked her eyes nor her hands, so that she could both read and write. Neither was she in the least deaf, and her powers of speech were perfect—that is to say, her articulation was perfect, for as to her language, it was made up of a strange confusion of tongues. The most obvious and predominant of all was good honest Scotch, or rather classical English with a strong Scotch accent. Along with this was mixed a certain portion of German, chiefly in idiom, but often in actual words, so that we were at first occasionally puzzled to know what the good old lady would be at. Her French was a singular compound of all these dialects. But in whatever language she spoke, her ideas were always so clear, and so well arranged, and her choice

of words, however mispronounced, so accurate, that after we had learned the cause of the seeming confusion, we never failed to understand her.

What surprised us most, on first making the Countess Purgstall's acquaintance, was her wonderful cheerfulness; as this was evidently inherent, and not the result of effort, and was constantly sustained, it imparted by reflection to all of us, young and old, a spirit of vivacity which invariably accompanied us while we remained in her room, and made those periods of the day which we passed by her bedside by far the most agreeable of the twenty-four hours. Her conversation, like her spirits, never flagged, it ranged all over the world, and dealt with every possible topic under heaven. She had mixed in the society of some of the first men of the day, not only at home but abroad; and as she possessed a memory of uncommon tenacity, she could relate anecdotes by the dozen, of almost any body one had ever heard of, from Bonaparte and the Emperor Alexander to the peasants of her own estate who had campaigned under them, or fought against them. Or she would relate stories of Sir Walter Scott's first essays in literature, tell about Schiller and Goëthe, or describe Haydn and Mozart's playing on the piano-forte. But it was not on such stirring themes alone that she was amusing and instructive; every thing she touched, however trivial or uninteresting in other hands, derived an agreeable point and useful purpose from her manner of handling it. Not her great friend Sir Walter had a more ample store of anecdotes, and these never came in awkwardly, but always so appropriately, that you might have thought sometimes they were made for the sole purpose of illustrating the subject under discussion. Yet, in spite of this boundless fertility, her conversation was merely sprinkled with anecdotes, not overloaded with them, "like an over-plummed plum-pudding," as was remarked of a famous story-teller. She had no particular wish to talk, however, for she delighted in nothing more than in hearing the opinions of others; and she possessed the rare merit of showing, in all she said, that she was speaking for the sake of the subject, and for that of the person she

was addressing, rather than for the sake of advancing any notions of her own. Nor was there ever the least show of heat or impatience in her discourse, except when she was defending some friend, or expressing her contempt of some unworthy personage, or questionable conduct which she thought it right to expose.

In the course of this narrative I shall have occasion to describe more particularly the nature of the intercourse which gradually established itself between this extraordinary old lady and the various members of my family; for she engaged almost all our time and attention, and won the warm affections of the whole party, from our grave selves down to my little boy, only a year old, who, with his Scotch maid, used to pass many hours of every day in her room.

Her anxiety to get us into her castle is sufficiently shown in the letters which I have given in the first chapter, and what I have said above will make it obvious that her chief reason was, to be relieved from the melancholy sort of solitude into which circumstances had thrown her. For, although she had a host of acquaintances, she had scarcely any intimate friends; and although people came from far and near to visit her, she met few who entered into her melancholy feelings—still fewer who understood her peculiar ways of thinking—and certainly none who could duly sympathize with those early and deep-rooted national associations, which had not only lost nothing of their force by the contact of foreign manners, but which a long course of severe misfortunes had rendered only the more dear to her.

Her prejudices, it may be supposed, were many; and these, so far as her adopted country was concerned, were greatly aggravated by the bitter circumstances of her own private life, independently of the horrible state of warfare, bloodshed, and military licentiousness of every kind to which nearly the whole country, and especially her own fruitful district, had been repeatedly a prey, under her own eyes. So that, as there was little in her past life since she had left her native land, which could afford any pleasing retrospect, and as she had ceased to take much

interest in the present state of the government under which she had suffered so much, it was not likely, I may say it was scarcely possible, that she should attach herself strongly, or indeed derive much comfort from any of the native families within her reach, even supposing them to have had the inclination, or, what was still less probable, the power of devoting much of their time and attention to her comforts. I may add, that, although she had no motive which could induce her to wish to live, all her earthly blessings, as she said, having been taken from her, yet she had the greatest horror at the idea of dying alone, without a friend to close her eyes, and under the exclusive care of servants.

All these things, and others to which I shall afterwards advert, excited in her the most vehement desire to establish in her castle an English family, who should devote their time chiefly to her, and whose tastes, habits, language, prejudices, and so forth, might, in the main, be found to fall in with her own. That any such family could be found who should permanently settle themselves under her roof, was manifestly beyond the reach of ordinary chances; but in her ardent way of viewing things, I have no doubt she formed some such expectation in our case, when she first learned that we had it in our power to pay her a visit. Still less do I doubt that, after she had fairly got hold of us, and found us suitable, she never meant we should escape from the castle. In this view she set about every species of incantation to detain us, and we, in turn, long quite unconscious of any such serious purpose on her part, naturally applied ourselves to the study of her comforts. The details of our intercourse will be seen by and by; but I shall merely mention just now the first specific instance in which we had it in our power to be of use to her, and to "reciprocate," as my friend Jonathan would say, the Countess's good offices.

The personal fortitude of the poor old lady was so great, that even in her severest fits of pain she betrayed none of her sufferings to us, fearful, as we afterwards learned, that she might thereby disincline us to come near her. But there was one particular twitch of pain to which she was

subjected so often, that we could not fail to remark it, and this, with her keen eye, she soon discovered, and much regretted.

One of her multifarious maladies was rheumatism in the right shoulder, and this had either been brought on, or was confirmed, by the necessity she was under of stretching back her hand to ring the bell, the cord of which hung at the head of the bed. Had her patience not been something far beyond that of ordinary mortals, this most painful and frequently-recurring exertion must have worn it out; and even as it was, she never rung the bell without saying something, though in a gentle manner, indicative of the suffering it cost her.

Upon studying the matter a moment, I saw how this item in the long category of her evils might be greatly diminished, if not entirely removed. But I said nothing to her, till I had walked to the neighbouring village of Feldbach and purchased a few fathoms of cord, with a nail or two. Next day I waited till her ladyship, having occasion to ring, made the usual good-humoured lamentation about the horrid bell.

"Will you be good enough, Countess, to let me remedy this evil?" I asked.

"Oh, it's impossible," she said, "it has been so for these three weary years that I have lain here, stretched, as you see me, and tossed, as Gay has it, 'on my thorny bed of pain.'"

"Well, only let me try," I replied; and having previously concerted with Joseph the butler to have a ladder in readiness at the door, it was introduced forthwith, and, by mounting to the cornice, I speedily attached a new bell-rope to the wire. The lower end of this rope I fastened by a nail to the floor, and then to the middle part of it attached another cord, which, being pulled tight in a horizontal direction, was tied to one of the bed-posts, at the height of four or five feet above the Countess's head. Finally, I tied a string to this horizontal cord, in such a way that the end, formed into a loop, hung before her, and within a couple of inches of the place where her right hand generally lay; the whole being so contrived that, by the

simple pressure of her finger, without raising the arm, and by scarcely moving her hand, the bell could at any time be sounded, and that more effectually than was formerly possible even by the exertion of all her force, and at the cost of much bodily pain. From that day the rheumatism in her shoulder gradually diminished, and before a fortnight elapsed, it had entirely left her.

Of a piece with this was another little contrivance of mine, for which she was almost as grateful, and which I applied as soon as she told me about one of her most constant distresses.

She was much troubled with a cough, especially at night, and this rendered it absolutely necessary that she should have recourse to her pocket handkerchief every ten minutes or quarter of an hour. The helpless nature of her situation made it indispensable that an attendant should remain at all times near her; but as she could not sleep, or even rest when not asleep, if there was a light in the room, it became necessary every time the handkerchief was missing—which was almost as often as it was required—that the bell should be rung, and the sick-nurse with her candle summoned to hunt for the said unfortunate pocket-handkerchief.

"Now," sighed the Countess, as she told me all this, "there is an evil beyond even your nautical resources to remedy."

"Is it?" I cried, catching hold of a bundle containing a quarter of a hundred quills just come from Gratz, and stripping off the red cord which I have observed in all countries is used by stationers for this purpose, I made one end of it fast to the loop of my recently-established bell-rope, and to the other I fixed the corner of the Countess's pocket-handkerchief.

"Now," I exclaimed, "you have only to put out your finger, catch the cord, and in the darkest night pull in your handkerchief, as you would do a fish at the end of a line."

The poor Countess was in ecstasies of gratitude, but she said nothing to the sick-nurse, who, falling asleep in the evening, and not being disturbed till the morning, fancied, on awaking, that her mistress must be dead, for such a night

of repose, they both declared, neither of them had passed during the three years of her attendance !

CHAPTER IV.

THE IRON COFFIN.

THE cordiality of our reception made us feel truly at home from the first moment of our entering the castle; and the Countess, after apologizing for not doing us the honours in person—as if it had been a thing she could have helped—begged us to select our own hours for breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper. "I have secured a good cook for you," she said; "and you will find abundant store of all kind of eatables, in a plain way; and the cook, as well as all the servants, have orders to consider you as their masters, so it will be your own fault if you do not arrange matters to your mind."

Thus invited, we took the liberty of naming the reasonable hour of four for dinner, instead of the very barbarous hour—as it seemed to us—of twelve, or even of one or two, as some fashionable families in that neighbourhood have ventured to make it. Breakfast, in almost all parts of the continent, is a wretched affair, and we found it invariably cost us and all the household so much trouble to get up any thing like a respectable morning meal, that we often passed it by in travelling, and took our cup of coffee and scrap of bread in silent despair.

On passing through Gratz, for example, the capital of Styria, on our way to the Castle, we stopped at the principal hotel; and having reason to think, from the astonishment of the people at our demands, that they had never before seen an English family, we took great care to instruct them on the subject of breakfast. But after waiting for three-quarters of an hour, and despatching three several express missions to the kitchen, the waiter, fancying

he was performing wonders, entered the room, literally with a jug of tepid water, one cup, and six tea-spoons!

We could not afford to do without breakfast, however, at Hainfeld, though we had but small hopes of success, even with all the authority of the Countess to back our resolution.

Joseph, the Countess's master of all work, was fortunately soon broken into the oddity of our ways, though it was long ere we succeeded in getting an adequate allowance of plates, knives, and forks. After selecting the most suitable apartments for sleeping-quarters, the next things to look out for were sitting-rooms—because, although the Countess expressed a strong wish to have some of us always with her, it was clear that her state of health, to say nothing of our own habits, would render it impossible to convert her bedroom into our drawingroom, after the manner in which her kindness suggested. Under the pilotage of the major-domo, Joseph, we set out accordingly to explore that wing of the Castle which faced the south-west, and lay on the opposite side of the court from that containing our bedroom suite of apartments. At the extreme left, or southern end of the wing, lay the Countess's own room and those of her attendants—the noisiest, the coldest, and the least convenient in the whole establishment—inasmuch as her bed stood exactly over the arched entrance to the Castle; and the pavement of this entrance being sadly broken up, every cart or carriage that arrived made a noise as if the Schloss were tumbling about our ears. It was quiet enough, however, for the Countess that her son had died in this room, to make her put up with this and any further amount of annoyance. The bare proposal to have her removed to some one of the nine-and-thirty other apartments on the same floor, threw her into extreme agitation.

Next to this sacred chamber came a small anti-room, crammed with grotesque oak and ebony furniture, and hung round with small pictures. Then followed a commodious, warm, and well-lighted library, richly stored with German and French books, besides a valuable collection of classical English works, mostly—with the exception of the Waverley Novels—about half a century astern of the pre-

sent taste. Adjacent to the library, we came upon the only really comfortable room in the castle, a distinction which it owed to the circumstance of its possessing an open fire-place—a very rare phenomenon in any part of Germany—and with this exception, I believe totally unknown in the remote province of Lower Styria. It was of the kind called a Franklin, being half stove, half fire-place, and had been placed there many years before by Lord Ashburton, who wisely thought that a winter in Styria, without the sight of a fire, must be a dreary affair.

We at once fixed upon this little room as our evening snuggery, where we took tea when our party was not too large; when company came, the library was used, until the winter fairly set in.

The next apartment contained a billiard-table; then came a small dining-room, and, at the end of the whole a larger supper hall, which we occupied only on high days and holidays; of these—strange to say, considering the condition of our hostess—we had not a few before we disentangled ourselves from the enchantments of this strange castle.

Having fairly established ourselves within doors, we yielded to the wish of the Countess, and made sundry little excursions to the most remarkable places in the neighbourhood, in order, as she suggested, to see the country before the beauty of the foliage was all gone, a precaution the more necessary, as the summer had been one of unusual heat and drought, and the autumnal tints and attendant decay were thereby antedated many weeks.

The first object of curiosity on many accounts, was the castle of Riegersburg. It had been for centuries the ancient abode of the renowned Purgstalls, and had passed from them only on the death of the last male possessor of the name, the poor Countess's only child. In old times it had proved a fortress of such strength, that the Turks, when they conquered and overran the greater part of the country which now forms the Austrian dominions, never made any impression upon it; and it is even said, they never dared to attempt its capture. It resembles Edinburgh Castle wonderfully, though it stands rather higher

above the plain—if plain it can be called, which plain is none—for a more waving, rolled about country I never before looked over, than that which surrounds Riegersburg, and extends to the foot of the Rhetian Alps. It may be added, that a more richly wooded, and, at the same time, industriously cultivated, and better peopled country could not be seen. For wherever the plough does not move, the ground is clad with trees, so that scarcely a nook is left unoccupied, except where rich green patches of meadow land in the valleys, or sunny knolls on the sides of the hills, are kept apart for the numerous cattle to graze upon. Almost all the wood is what is called natural, and being kept solely for fuel, is rarely allowed to attain any great size; whether from the favourable nature of the soil and climate, or from the inherent beauty which belongs to nature when let alone, I know not, but nothing could be more thick and luxuriant than these woods; and Autumn having by this time drawn his many-coloured brush across the picture, the landscape looked as if the sky had lost its hold of the rainbow and sent it in showers over the ground beneath.

The interior of the castle possessed a very different and more melancholy kind of interest; and we could not help feeling what a contrast there often is between the best and strongest, and most enduring of human works, and the most common, and, as it were, careless productions of nature. The scenery about Riegersburg is as young and fresh and vigorous as ever, revelling in eternal successions of beauty—while the gigantic castle, many parts of which are cut out of the living rock, or built of huge masses of stone, bound together with bars of iron, and all destined "to last for ever," according to man's vain boast, is silently but rapidly yielding before Time's scythe; the effect of whose touch, I think, is often more evident upon such strongholds than it is upon those which possess less of what is termed durability. The most melancholy thing of all in such places, is the cold air of desolation which reigns in the empty halls, the total want of use for the magnificent apartments, and the mixture of splendour and shabbiness, of past wealth and present poverty, which

implies that the abode has changed from high hands to low ones. In the principal room stood the state-bed of the ancient lords of the castle; but the tattered satin curtains, the tarnished gold of the heavy fringes, and the worm-eaten posts and crumbling cornices, gave token of its long neglect. The ceiling appeared to be the only part of the room which "decay's effacing fingers" had not yet reached. It was formed of very costly inlaid work, consisting of some dark coloured wood, probably ebony, on a white ground of box or beech, so extremely rich in appearance, that it looked more like the work of a fancy table in a lady's boudoir, than the ceiling of a castle chamber.

In passing from one old room to another, we had to skirt along by a series of narrow galleries, some of them quite desolate and abandoned, while others had been converted to vulgar modern uses. On coming out of the grand banquetting room to pass into the hall or withdrawing room, we had to go along one of these galleries; and in doing so, were obliged to thread our way through piles of Indian corn, stacks of fire-wood, and ranges of washing-tubs, and to duck our heads under cords covered with linen hung up to dry. Next minute we found ourselves in the midst of family pictures, huge coats of arms, carved in oak, guilded cornices, fresco painted walls and ceilings, and enormous folding doors covered with works in relief, and reaching, like the ornamental entrance to some Gothic churches, nearly to the top of the wall. Anon, on making our exit by one of these solemn portals, instead of finding ourselves in a grand court, or lobby, or splendid staircase, in character with the magnificent suit of apartments we had passed through, we had enough to do not to break our noses in scrambling down a steep awkward darkish sort of back stair, the poor remains of some vanished wing of the Castle.

One of those precarious paths brought us, at the end of our transit, to the main road close to the iron-shod doors of the seventh gate, or highest line of defence, by which, in ancient and barbarous times, the upper part of the fortress had been defended from the lower.

It seems that in those good old days the succession of this stronghold had been disputed by two brothers, who held the castle for some years jointly, and all the time in bitter hostility. The eldest had possessed himself of the top, three sides of which being a perpendicular rock, and the fourth in the hands of his amiable relative, he had no means of communication with the surrounding country. He was accordingly in a fair way of being starved out, when the bold idea occurred to him of cutting a "corniche road" round the face of the precipice, by which means he wound his way out and in, and obtained his supplies. The rival brothers being now on pretty equal terms, continued to blaze away at one another till both divisions of the castle were almost demolished.

On returning through the lower range of Riegersburg, where a picturesque little village has been built under the shadow of the fort, we took a look, by the Countess's desire, at the church, within which she told us she had erected a chapel. As she had never changed from the Protestantism in which she was brought up at Edinburgh, and had acquired any thing but love or respect for the Catholicism of Austria, this proceeding appeared very odd. We examined the chapel, however, which was done up with the simple taste that characterized every thing she undertook.. In the centre she had placed a neat, though rather showy altar; and on one side a handsome granite monument to her husband and son. Over all blazed the glorious Saint Wenceslaus, the patron of the Purgstall family, not quite in keeping with the quiet elegance of the rest; and the whole affair puzzled us not a little.

These anomalies were explained by the Countess on our return to Hainfeld. She asked us little or nothing about the decaying grandeur of the ancient seat of her family in their prosperous days; and as it had passed from her hands to those of people who neglected it, and cared for none of its renowned associations, we refrained from alluding to it. But she was eloquent on the subject of the chapel, where, in fact, owing to the peculiar cast of her temperament, nearly all her interests lay buried with her

husband and son: and we soon found that her sole wish on earth, or at least the wish which was always uppermost in her mind, was to be laid beside them. As difficulties might arise, however, on the score of her being a Protestant, or from the castle being no longer in the possession of her family, she thought it prudent to take every precaution beforehand to ensure this grand object of her anxiety. The priests accordingly were propitiated by this magnificent embellishment of the church; and the congregation felt themselves obliged to the Countess for placing before their wondering eyes a picture done in Vienna, and so much beyond their provincial conceptions of the power of art. It was generally understood also, that the Countess had left in her will certain sums of money to be distributed to the poor after her body should be quietly interred in the family vault of the Purgstalls; and the clergy of the spot had an idea, whether true or not, that in the same event, the poor in spirit were not forgotten in her ladyship's will.

All these things she told us, not only with the utmost unconcern as to her death, but I may say with that sort of lively interest with which a person speaks of an agreeable visit to be made in the spring of the ensuing year.

It was difficult at first to know exactly how to take all this—whether to be grave or gay—since it did not seem quite civil to be discussing as a pleasant affair, and in her presence, the details of our worthy hostess's funeral. So I thought it best merely to ask her whether, as in England, there might not be some difficulty as to interment in a vault within the church except in a leaden coffin. I suggested to her, that as in Austria people are buried very quickly after their death, there might be no time, especially in a remote country place, to make the requisite preparations.

"And do you think," retorted the old lady, with a curious sort of smile, "do you think I was going to risk the success of the prime object of my thoughts upon such a contingency as that? No! no! you shall see," and ringing the bell, she summoned Joseph.

"Get the keys," she exclaimed, "and show Captain

Hall my coffin." And turning to us, she added, "when you see it, I think you will admit that it is not likely to be refused admittance to the church on the score of want of strength, or, for that matter, for want of beauty."

I confess I was not a little curious to discover how either strength or beauty could be given to a leaden coffin; I found, however, it was not made of lead but of iron, and so tastefully contrived, that it looked more like one of those ornamental pieces of sculpture which surmount some of the old monuments in Westminster Abbey, than a coffin intended for real use. Having removed three huge fantastically-shaped padlocks, we folded back the lid, and I was surprised to see two large bundles, neatly sewed up in white linen, lying in the coffin, one at each end. On stooping down and touching them, I discovered they were papers, and could read in the Countess's hand-writing, the following words—

"Our Letters.—J. A. Purgstall."

CHAPTER V.

THE NEIGHBOURS.

"Now," said the Countess, "that you have seen the ruined, desolate, and uninhabited castle of our exterminated family, I wish you would take a walk to another venerable chateau which is not, as yet, deserted, though I fear it is hastening to the same fate as poor Riegersburg. Besides," she added, "you ought to see something of your neighbours, now that you are established in Styria."

We were all compliance, and set off next day to visit Gleichenberg, which lies about a league and a half amongst the valleys south of Hainfeld, and, unlike that place, really looks its character of a castle, being built on the top of a steep rock, inaccessible on three sides. In other respects, too, it is beautifully situated, and in the season when we

first visited it nothing could be more striking than the scene viewed from the windows of the inhabited part of the building. The lustre of the decaying foliage, like the colours of the dying dolphin, almost dazzled the sight: and the thick woods on every side crowded so close upon the castle, that until we came near it we could scarcely see even the turrets. In this respect Gleichenberg differs from its opposite neighbour Riegersburg, which is seen from every part of the surrounding country. Like that once famous stronghold, however, poor Gleichenberg is allowed to fall into a wretched state of neglect, and we could not help sighing to think that even a very little expense and a very little trouble might check the process of ruin, and render it one of the most charming places in the world. As it was, we had to make our way, as we best could, amongst piles of rubbish, and along roads, which, though formed in the solid rock, had been so worn out that they were barely passable, and over bridges scarcely strong enough to bear the weight of a cat. It is always painful to see the ancient residence of magnificence turned to base purposes. We can look with picturesque complacency on a good honest ruin, covered with ivy, and tenanted only by owls and foxes; but there is little or no pleasure in wandering through the deserted courts, damp staircases, and empty rooms of a huge palace, where half a dozen meager retainers occupy the establishment which might have lodged as many hundreds.

With these feelings, and expecting nothing but the desolation we had seen enough of at Riegersburg, we clambered up to the second story, and there, most unexpectedly, came upon a very pleasantly lighted, well furnished, small suite of the snuggest possible apartments, occupied by the proprietor of the castle, the accomplished Countess of Trautmansdorff.

Melancholy though it be to witness the dilapidation of an ancient dwelling, it is still more touching, I think, to observe the effect of that moral dilapidation which is consequent upon ruined fortunes, especially when the remaining fragments, so to speak, are of fine workmanship. I have seldom, in any country, seen a person of more ele-

gant manners than this poor lady, once amongst the most distinguished stars of the fashionable constellations of Vienna, and still a beautiful woman. Though so much reduced in circumstances as to be obliged to live in the mere corner of her own castle, and surrounded by ruin and destruction of every kind, her rooms were neatly, and in many respects, richly fitted up.

In spite of all her difficulties, too, she has maintained, though in a less splendid style than formerly, her proper position in society. The severest of her trials, I can well believe, was the almost entirely ruined health of her only daughter. It is said that when fifteen months old the child slipped through the hands of its nurse, who was dancing it on a table, and that the fall produced a concussion of the brain, or fracture of the skull, I know not which; in short, an injury, the consequence of which was that the poor little thing could neither speak nor walk for eight years. Since then she had grown up to be a tall fine looking girl; and, what is a thousand times more interesting, it seems her intellects, which had been only weakened and arrested, as it were, in their course, not destroyed, have been gradually improving, so that there is a prospect of her being entirely restored. What a truly heavenly reward must it not be to the mother for all her patience in sorrow, to regain the mental companionship of a daughter, who, unreflecting people might at one time have said, would have been better dead than alive!

On our return the Countess was so pleased with our account of Gleichenberg and its inmates, that she started us off the next day to visit another of her neighbours living in a chateau called Steinberg, one of the multitudinous castles with which that part of the country is studded, almost all of which, with the single exception of our home, dear old Hainfeld, look the character admirably. It is only, however, without that these buildings make any show; and in our round of visits to the neighbouring houses, we found that it was merely a succession of ruins we were called upon to admire openly, and to sigh over in secret.

The proprietor of Steinberg had lived so fast that his means became exhausted, and he was obliged to sell the

castle and estate, after stripping both as completely as possible. The new purchaser, though neither a gambler nor a spendthrift, nor a free liver, nor in any way extravagant, happened not to be one of the wisest of men, though one of the most good-natured, and thus, somehow, it happened that the rents were always spent faster than they came in; and, in process of time, the castle and lands once more changed ownership. On this occasion rather an odd arrangement was made, which I am surprised is not oftener adopted in like circumstances. Instead of the estate being put up for public sale, it was quietly arranged that the next heirs, two nephews, should come at once into possession, while the uncle and his family were to occupy, for life, a small suite of apartments, and to draw their daily bread, and daily beef and potatoes, from the adjacent home farm.

At all events, there we found him, after a strange navigation through broken down corridors and crazy stairs which conducted us to a passage, high up, from which we again made a steep descent as if we had been going into a cellar. The rooms, however, were light, airy, and most cheerful, with windows looking over the prettiest part of the country. The good lady of the house, and her whole establishment, were somewhat different from what we had seen the day before, but, in their way, not less pleasing. Her genuine and hearty hospitality was indicated by the restless bustle she kept up during all the time of our visit, toiling and panting between the kitchen and the drawing-room, bringing in dishes of grapes, trays of glasses filled with syllabub, cakes, and all sorts of good things, till the children were half sick with stuffing, and the rest of the company ashamed or unable to eat more. The rattling of a tea equipage at last gave us notice that if we did not wish utterly to destroy all appetite for dinner we ought to beat our retreat.

Amongst the numerous curiosities of the castle of Steinberg I shall mention only one. It was a very thin but strong iron mask, with clasps and locks of the same metal, of which a redoubted Baron of olden times is said to have made frequent use. It appears that he had a very hand-

some wife, who was sadly coquettish, and more fond of exhibiting her pretty face than he at all approved of. Whenever he stirred from home, therefore, he was wont to encase his slippery partner's head in this iron mask, and put the key in his pocket. Tradition says that the gentleman mistook the application, and quite misplaced the protection, as the lady, though she could not exhibit the light of her countenance to her lovers, whispered still softer endearments through the bars, and in the end taught the foolish noble that in love as in war, physical obstacles, so far from keeping out an invading enemy, generally serve as his best stepping stones to conquest.

We should have been glad to be left quiet a little after these two excursions; but the Countess, who, in a kind and friendly way, was rather arbitrary, reminded us that we were close to the frontier of Hungary, on the other side of which some very particular friends of hers resided. She therefore begged us to drive so far, see a little of that celebrated country, take our dinner with her friends, and return at night. She also gave us instructions how best to see a celebrated field of battle near St. Gothard, between the Turks and Austrians, in the year 1665, "which," continued she, "you have doubtless heard of?"

We certainly had never heard a word of the matter, but away we went, in compliance with her ladyship's wishes, crossed the Hungarian frontier, and having climbed the steeple of the village of St. Gothard, which lies at the confluence of the Raab and the Feistritz, were instructed by our guide in the details of the great fight alluded to. I confess I took more interest in the wild, indeed half savage costume and looks of the Hungarians, most of whom were dressed in long, flowing, white cloaks. The language, manners, and appearance in every respect of these people differed essentially from those of the Styrians whom we had left but a few miles behind. This seems the more strange, as the boundary between the two countries is nothing but an imaginary line, or at most a hedge and a ditch, which the Countess's coachman had some difficulty, I thought, in pointing out, though he had lived thereabouts all his life. I cannot better describe St.

Gothard to those who have been in the East than by comparing it to an Indian town on a market day; and those who have not been in the East may derive some notion of it from Daniell's exquisite drawings, or those of less remote scenes from the graphic pencil of Horace Vernet, whose pictures of African manners are so admirably true to nature.

What we heard of Hungary did not very much tempt us to go far into that still half-savage region. The peasantry are kept in a deplorable state of subjection by their lords, who, if not vested with the power of life and death, in all cases where their will and pleasure is contradicted, possess the power of punishing corporally and summarily whoever may chance to offend them. We were shown a letter one day from a lady who had gone as governess to that part of Hungary which lies nearest to Poland, and where, from political and other circumstances, the country is in an extraordinary state of excitement. There it would seem the peasantry have a particular dislike to their seigneurs, and in consequence of some of their insurrectionary proceedings, no fewer than seventeen of them were hanged on the trees close to the house in which the lady was residing! So that she and her pupils could not go out to walk, without passing the spot where these seventeen victims were exposed *in terrorem* to the remaining tenantry. Nor dared she or her young ladies stir from the house without three armed servants as an escort.

After learning this and many similar enormities, it was pleasant to hear our Hungarian friends assert, that although they form politically a part of the Austrian dominions, they are in fact an independent and free nation; and what was still more amusing, to hear them maintain roundly, that they possessed a constitution very much resembling that of England. Upon coming to close quarters in conversation with some of these Hungarians, we learned that the chief, and, in fact, as far as we could discover, the sole, point of resemblance between the constitutions of Hungary and England consisted in their both having two legislative chambers. But there occurs this trifling dis-

tinction,—in Hungary, both chambers consist of hereditary nobility, neither being elective by the people. Moreover, the country, though not thickly inhabited, contains upwards of three hundred thousand nobles—that is, persons of noble family, all of whom are exempted from taxes, and are vested with many other arbitrary and galling privileges. However low in life these persons of noble blood may be—butchers, bakers, shoemakers—they retain their nobility, and exercise their privileges. This is only a small item in the catalogue of differences between us; but we soon found it hopeless to talk to the Hungarians on the subject, and it is perhaps well for them if they are pleased with what they cannot hope to alter.

In the midst of these national discussions the dinner appeared; and as our morning's expedition had made us more than usually hungry, we looked forward with less dread than we had ever done before to the overloaded table which all reports of the nature and extent of a German dinner led us to expect. But our fears on this score, if we had any, were groundless, for a less loaded repast never was seen. There was positively too little for the company, and we felt awkward at having, by our intrusion, diminished the scanty allowance of the family. Every dish was carried off the table as clean as if, instead of a goodly company of Hungarian ladies and gentlemen, with a couple of hungry heretics from England, the baron had introduced a dozen of his wild boar hounds to lick the platters.

As this was the only Hungarian dinner we saw during our stay in these parts, a notice of it may perhaps interest the lovers of good cheer. We had first of all coldish, dirty-looking, thin soup; then a plate with ill-cut slices, of ill-salted tongue; and after a long and dreary interval, a dish consisting of slices of boiled beef, very cold, very fat, and very tough. I know not whence the fat came; for in that country there are no cattle bred for the table, but only for the plough and the wagon, and after many years of labour they are killed, not because they are fit to be eaten (quite the contrary,) but because they can work no longer. The next dish promised better, it was a sal-

mon, twisted into a circle, with his tail in his mouth, like the allegorical images of eternity. But I am sure if I were to live, as the Americans say, from July to Eternity, I should not wish to look upon the like of such a fish again. It had been brought all the way from Carinthia by the bold baron himself. I need not say more. And yet its bones were so nicely cleaned, that the skeleton might have been placed in a museum of natural history, and named by Agassiz or Deshayes, without further trouble. Next arrived a dish of sausages, which disappeared in what the Germans call an Augenblick, or twinkling of an eye. Lastly came the roast, as it always does in those countries, but instead of a jolly English sirloin or haunch, the dish consisted of a small shred of what they facetiously called venison—but such venison! Yet had the original stag been alive from which this morsel was hewn, it could not have moved off faster. To wind up all, instead of dessert, we were presented with a soup plate holding eleven small dry sweet-cakes, each as big as a Genevese watch-glass. In short, not to spin out this sad repast, it reminded me of long bygone days spent in the midshipmen's birth on short allowance, where the daily bread and beef of his gracious Majesty used to vanish in like manner, and leave, as Shakspeare says, "not a wreck behind!" I ought not to omit that the wine was scarcely drinkable, excepting, I presume, one bottle of Burgundy, which the generous master of the house kept faithfully to himself, not offering even the lady by his side, a stranger and his own invited guest, a single glass, but drinking the whole, to the last drop, himself! So much for a Hungarian magnate!

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIVAL GUESTS.

Our friendly hostess furnished us with many other opportunities of seeing the society of her neighbourhood; for although, as I have mentioned, she had been for several years bedridden, she nevertheless greatly enjoyed good company, and possessed in herself the means of entertaining her guests in a manner equalled by very few even of those who are not pinned like her, poor woman, to one spot.

It required, indeed, as will be seen by and by, a good deal more trouble to free the house from disagreeable guests, than to procure the company of persons who contributed to the cheerfulness of the party; for the style of living in Styria differed widely from that of England, or any where else, that we had seen. It reminded us constantly of what we had read in old books, or heard in the stories of old people. Our castle, in fact, was a sort of liberty-hall, to which people came uninvited at all hours and seasons; sometimes they came to dinner; sometimes to supper; and generally they staid the night, but vanished next day;—or they remained a week, just as suited themselves, kissing their hostess's hand when they came and when they went, welcome either way.

The master of the house having been long dead and gone, and the mistress confined to one corner, the chateau, it may be thought, would wear a desolate appearance, and be so in fact. Instead of that, the ancient hospitality was kept up undiminished, under the immediate guidance of the butler Joseph, who, after having fought with Napoleon in most of his campaigns, had, by the change of times, been led to employ his green old age in the service of the Countess. Manfully, indeed, had he stood by her in the midst of her misfortunes. At one time her distress became so great, that what with debts, real and fictitious, the expenses of lawsuits, and the severe exactions of the government to pay off the costs of the dreadful wars in which

Austria had been worsted, she was reduced to a state of poverty. This was the more severe upon her, as, up to the time of her son's death, she had been the virtual head of an immense property, and lived in great splendour. At that critical period, when her ruin seemed inevitable, and the poor Countess was almost entirely deserted, she asked Joseph to stay by her. "Madam," said the old soldier, "if we shall be reduced to live on potatoes, I shall never desert you." This the Countess told me herself, adding, that during two-and-twenty years, many of which were years of poverty, and all of them of sickness and sorrow, he had not only never expressed a wish to leave her, but had preserved his cheerfulness throughout every disaster, and by always taking the bright side of things (which unfortunately for herself was not the poor Countess's own habit), he had essentially contributed to render her life not absolutely intolerable.

This old soldier, as I have already said, made a capital Major-Domo; and being a man of the world, he helped the company at dinner not merely to topics, but to his opinions thereon, which had a very droll effect at first, and often made strangers stare. As he had learned from his campaignings what the want of comforts was, he became the better able to supply such visitors as ourselves, for instance, with the means of living comfortably. As he was, moreover, a man of abilities and resource, who stuck at nothing, and made no difficulties, we got on famously together. In short, our friend Joseph was truly a second Caleb Balderstone, who, at all hazards, made the most of the family means—smiled under every reverse of fortune, and essentially contributed to the maintenance of the prosperity of the household to which he was attached, by courageously resolving that nothing should or could go wrong at Hainfeld, as long as his misstress lived.

The Countess, in my presence, gave him formally to understand that I was to be looked upon, for the time, as master of the castle, and my directions were to be obeyed with the same exactness as her own orders; and these injunctions she desired him to communicate to the whole establishment.

"I have already," she continued, but addressing me, "given similar instructions to the cook; and therefore, if there be any thing within the scope of Hainfeld to produce, for which you or your family do not ask when you require it, the fault is with yourselves, and I shall be very much mortified."

The Countess's whole mind, indeed, seemed to be employed at that time in discovering what it was we liked best; what was most agreeable and useful for the children; and what, in short, in her household arrangements, in the society she brought to the castle, and in her own deportment to us, would be most agreeable, and most likely to keep out of our heads all thoughts of going away—any allusion to which threw the old lady into such agitation, that as much as possible we forbore speaking of our future plans, and merely determined to take our own measures quietly, but to be resolute in going at the period we considered right. It will be seen presently how skilfully our hostess managed to baffle and upset all our schemes.

In the mean time, we very soon found ourselves so much at home, that we set the children to their regular lessons, and fell into habits of business, such as they were, ourselves. The even tenor of our lives, while it furnished few or no striking incidents, allowed us ample leisure for looking about us, and forming opinions as to the state of the country, chiefly from the conversation of the many intelligent persons who visited the Castle.

It was some time, however, before the crowd of novel objects ceased to present a confused mass, or we could speculate with any feeling of confidence either on the domestic manners or on the political condition of a people circumstanced so differently from any which our previous travels had given us an opportunity of observing. Neither did we care much, for we intended soon to recommence our journey, and a subject so vast, we felt, was not to be grasped in a few weeks. So we fairly resigned ourselves into the hands of our obliging hostess, who, when she succeeded in making us promise not to think of leaving her for some time, undertook to provide us, both indoors and

abroad, with objects of interest. How well she kept her word, I shall endeavour to show.

When we first arrived at Hainfeld, we found living in the house two young ladies from the neighbouring provincial capital of Styria, called Gratz, a very pretty place, and in wealth and fashion just such a rival to Vienna as Bath is to London ; and the manners of the gay world there, it may be presumed, partake of the same distinctions from those of the metropolis. As we were prevented by circumstances from visiting Vienna, we had only a few, and those indirect, means of judging of this important matter. We met, for example, with a good many persons during our stay at Hainfeld, who, though no longer resident in Vienna, had been bred there, and these we could compare with our Gratz acquaintances.

Both the young ladies I have mentioned were lively and pleasing persons ; they spoke French readily, but not very well; and they both spoke English a little, and so as to be easily understood ; for it is much the fashion in Germany, as we found afterwards during our extensive tour in that country, to study English. As they professed a great desire to improve themselves in speaking, it would have been a very obvious course to have profited by such an opportunity, especially as we were all not only willing, but anxious to afford them the means of correcting what was erroneous in their pronunciation or construction. Nevertheless, they insisted upon speaking their own lumbering French, in place of English; and they actually prevented us from being of any use to them, by invariably turning into a jest any thing in commendation, and showing evident displeasure when corrected in a fault. This was teazing enough, since we ourselves were beginning the study of German, and we hoped to have made a reciprocal treaty, and bartered English in exchange for German idiom. But, most perversely, they would no more speak their own language than ours ; and thus we went on, in the matter of languages, like the French and English nations in the matter of commerce—each possessing the articles the other requires, but never agreeing to exchange them. This smacked of provincial taste, which

became still more manifest as our acquaintance advanced. In spite of all we could say or do, our pretty friends were never at their ease, and were always striving at some effect, instead of trusting to their own natural parts and accomplishments, which were considerable, and which we were willing to make the most of, for we liked them much.

In process of time, it came out that one of these damsels was a poetess, and what I confess I learned with equal surprise and alarm—an English poetess! That any one, so slightly acquainted even with the elementary parts of a language, should venture to deal with the highest, was matter of wonder. I naturally felt no small dread lest I should be called upon to pronounce an opinion upon verses constructed under such circumstances, and which by no possibility could escape being execrable. I very soon saw indeed that the young lady felt a strong desire to obtain my favourable judgment on her productions; but instead of showing them to me frankly herself, she gave them to the Countess, with a special injunction that I was *not* to see them. Of course, the old lady took this as it seemed to her to be intended, laughed at the limitation, as I should no doubt myself have done, had not my curiosity to read the stanzas been altogether subordinate to the horror of having to praise them. Next day the ladies highly commended my probity, as they rather slyly, and with an air of suppressed mortification, called my small piece of jesuitism; and then commenced a series of scenes of coquetry and mock humility, which must have felt very wearisome in a country house in winter, had I not been sustained by the hope of escaping a sight of the poetry.

The Countess, who, though chained to her bed, seemed to know, by a sort of intuition, every thing that was going on in the castle, soon remarked to us that she suspected the Gratz ladies were not doing the honours of their country in the style she had hoped when she invited them. "Therefore," said she, "I have sent across the hills to some other friends whom I think you will like better,

and who I am sure will more justly appreciate the society which accident has enabled me to put in their way."

The commencement of a Northwester on the coast of Labrador could not look more threatening than the countenance of our Gratz young ladies, when the news of the promised accession to our party was spread abroad. In the incautious haste of jealousy, they insinuated that some of us had instigated the Countess to call in these hostile troops in the shape of auxiliaries. But the poor girls "took nothing by this motion," as the lawyers say; for while we disclaimed all participation in the conspiracy, we acknowledged our satisfaction at its success.

In due season the new party arrived, a mother and two daughters. Had we left the country the day before, I might, according to the received method of recording national characteristics, have written down in my diary, "all the young ladies in Lower Styria write English verses, and are vain and coquetish." And, on the other hand, had I seen only these new comers, I might, on the same judicious plan of generalizing, have noted, "that all the ladies of that country are well-bred, unaffected, pretty, and well informed." For I really do not know when, nor in what land, I have met with more artless or pleasing specimens of what young women ought to be, than these uncommonly agreeable persons. The eldest might be about two or three-and-twenty; and though not so very pretty as her sister, whose age was about seventeen, she possessed in a higher degree that beauty of expression which, while it is beyond the reach of mere features to produce, gives a decisive character and purpose to every line of the countenance, making the eyes speak, and the lips hold intelligible language, even when no words pass them. If to these charms are added the recommendations of good sense, good taste, and good manners, all based on right principles and generous feelings, and rendered effective by an acquaintance with the world, by native vivacity, and a total absence of selfishness, a character is formed which need dread no rivalry that the most polished society on earth could boast of.

What added to our interest in this very charming person

was her speaking English, so nearly in perfection, that the slight foreign accent, and even the mistakes she sometimes made, served only to engage the attention more closely, and very often gave additional strength to her meaning, which was always judicious, by a slight but not inappropriate exaggeration in the expression. We could perceive, too, when she spoke her native German, which was the most pleasing thing possible to the ear, that her accent was decidedly different from the startling harshness of the Styrian variety of that extraordinary language to which we had been accustomed for some weeks. What the Vienna noblemen and other "eligibles" of the capital can have been about, I know not, but sure I am, that if I had been a young unmarried man, whether "eligible" or otherwise, I should presently have fallen over head and ears in love with this pretty German.

Both our new friends not only expressed themselves anxious to learn, but seriously exerted themselves to improve in speaking English, while they mightily flattered us, by taking an eager interest in hearing about the countries far and near which we had gone over. As they had been brought up in the capital, they had had the benefit of the best masters, and accordingly were as accomplished as mere teaching could make them. All the masters on earth, however, could have gone but a little way essentially, to produce such results. Indeed, I doubt much if they could have gone one step in any case in framing manners of so much simplicity and elegance. On the contrary, it is to be apprehended, that as in Austria generally, the substratum of principle and sentiment is not good, the forced culture of talents may often lead to rankness, but seldom to richness of the moral crop. At any rate, however it may have been brought about, and whether most be due to nature, or most to art, it is particularly pleasing, as in the instance I am describing, to meet in remote places, and where we least expect it, a style of manners and a purity of thought, which our prejudices are too apt to insinuate can belong only to the most favoured parts of the most favoured lands.

On the other hand, it makes one quite melancholy to

think how such rare merits are almost inevitably destined to be utterly wasted, in a country where such a thing as a marriage of choice is so very rare, that when it does happen, it certainly forms the exception to the rule, not, alas! the example. I was, indeed, much disappointed and grieved to find, that in Austria the whole of the domestic relations were in about as bad a predicament as in Italy. How, indeed, can it possibly be otherwise, when marriages are arranged by the parents, and not by the parties themselves who are to pass their lives—I will not say together—but as husband and wife? Mutual attachment, as I am given to understand, being seldom if ever the motive to such connexions in that country, the consequences are just what might be expected from trusting such delicate matters to the hands of any, even the most affectionate, and it might be supposed, the most disinterested of agents. To do any sort of business by proxy is proverbially the way to do it ill;—but when old heads come to settle the arrangements between young hearts, the evil is one which even the labours of a whole life are unable to remedy. When two young people are brought together by any motive but that of mutual affection, and tied to one another by a ceremony which owes its chief sanction to the opinion of society—be its professed sanctions what they may,—and when, from the nature of their education, they are not restrained by any scruples on the score of principle, and are still less invited by usage to be virtuous,—and when, of course, their very warmest and best feelings are wasted for want of generous employment, they are extremely apt to mistake the indulgence of their passions for a duty, as soon as fitting objects of their regard come in their way. It is then, alas! that the formal chain by which their cold domestic relations have been held together, is snapped in two at the first touch of genuine sympathy, and the solemn marriage vow takes the degraded rank of a dicer's oath.

The decencies of civilized society—the good taste of the most influential persons in every class—the obvious interest of the parties respectively—and the habitual long established customs of what is termed good company,

generally modify the external behaviour of married persons, even in Italy and Austria, into something in which there is not much to strike the transient glance of a stranger. But the smallest careful inquiry draws back the flimsy veil. The causes which lead to this sad state of things are very curious and instructive; and as they do not lie very deep, and are easily explained, they may perhaps be adverted to farther on. The Countess was very eloquent on this point, and related many anecdotes illustrative of the state of manners in Austria and Italy, which she used to assert were pretty much alike in this respect.

The following very ridiculous story she assured us she had from a gentleman on whose veracity she could rely. The scene of it was in Italy.

"A young lady, about eighteen or twenty, was withdrawn from the convent in which she had passed her life since the time she was an infant. On being brought home she soon learned from her attendant, or in some other round-about way, that she was ere long to be married; as her parents, however, said nothing to her on the subject, she could not even guess who the person was with whom she was to be connected; and the only official notice she had of the fact arose from her being carried to the milliner's and jeweller's to fit on the dresses and trinkets suitable for the occasion. Her curiosity was now raised to the highest pitch; but as she had never seen her mother except for a short visit once or twice a year, and of course had no intimacy with her, she could not at first bring herself to ask any direct question on the subject. One day two young men dined at their house, and as this was rather an unusual circumstance, she thought it probable that one of them—for they were both in the enviable class of "eligibles,"—must be her intended husband. They both paid her equal attention, but with very different success. To one she felt an invincible repugnance, to the other she was well disposed to yield her affections; and such had now become her anxiety to learn her fate, that, finding her mother in a most unusually good humour with her, in the course of the evening she ventured respectfully

to say, "Mamma, if it be not too great a liberty, may I beg of you to tell me the name of the gentleman I am to be married to next week?"—"Liberty!" exclaimed the astonished parent, "liberty you may well call it! How dare you ask such a question? And," added she, with a significant shake of her head, "let me warn you, my daughter, not to run the risk of incurring your father's displeasure by showing him any of this premature and undutiful curiosity. For, if you do, I should not wonder if he were to pack you back to your convent, not for a season, but for life." Accordingly, she held her peace, and in ten days afterwards was married to one of the two men who had dined at the house, but, unfortunately, he was the wrong one!"

But I am forgetting the rival guests, our Gratz and Vienna young ladies, who, although apparently the best friends imaginable, were too little alike to be very cordial, and we had no small difficulty in shaping our course between them so as to avoid giving offence to either group, and yet to profit by the merits of both, for we felt well disposed to all the parties. Indeed, had our Gratz friends been content to let pretty well alone, we should have remained the best friends possible to the end of the chapter. Few people, however, who have not fortitude and self-control enough to repress the feeling of mortification which springs out of unsuccessful rivalry, have either pride or discretion enough to restrain its expression, even when the mischief is thereby likely to be aggravated. And in the course of the very first evening after the strangers had arrived, one of our old friends said to me, in a reproachful tone, that she suspected me of a great "infidelité" to her. I really did not understand what she meant, and said so.

"I grievously suspect," continued the pretty provincial, "that you prefer these new comers, to your old friends?"

I ought, in all courtesy, to have disclaimed any such dereliction, and to have protested that such an idea was vain and ridiculous, as President Jackson slyly says, in his message to Congress, when accused of bullying the

French; but I was taken by surprise, and said nothing—while the poor girl, colouring with very natural anger, turned away to sip her cup of tea with what appetite she might.

A few days afterwards, just as we sat down to dinner, a carriage drove under the archway, and one of the young ladies being called out, returned in a few minutes, breathless, and with a letter in her hand, exclaiming,

"My mother has sent for us—we must go directly."

And they left the table long before dinner was over, ostensibly to pack up their things, but in reality to slip off without taking leave of any one; and we never saw them more.

The provocation we felt—if, indeed, we felt any—at this Gratz edition of what is called "taking French leave," was very short-lived. Had it been much greater, indeed, what followed—alas! too soon—would have obliterated every trace but that of the most kindly feelings towards our earliest Styrian friends.

A ball was given at Gratz, not long after the above scenes, at which our two friends attended. The night was bitter cold—but as the ground was dry, and the distance but ten steps across the street, the ladies, hot from the dance, ran over to their home. They had brought, however, a wrong key with them, and no tugging of the bell could awaken the drowsy servants. Instead of going back instantly, as they ought to have done, they remained for twenty minutes before they gained admittance, all the time exposed to the biting of a harsh north-east wind. In this brief interval the nipping frost had struck its icy and deadly fangs into the pretty bud which was just beginning to open. The youngest of our lively friends—the poor poetess withal—was taken so ill, almost immediately, that she was carried off by a rapid decline in the course of a few weeks!

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARCHDUKE JOHN OF AUSTRIA.

EVER since our arrival at Hainfeld, there had been much talk of our visiting the Archduke John, the Emperor of Austria's brother. At that season he resided at his vineyard, near Marburg, close to the foot of the Bacher Gebirge, which is one of the eastern prolongations of the Julian Alps, lying on the right bank of the great river Drave. As our friend the Countess had for the last thirty years been on very friendly terms with his Imperial Highness, she readily managed to arrange our visit, and in her great anxiety that we should receive favourable impressions of Styria, its people, and its scenery, she daily urged us to make out this expedition before the winter set in. A messenger was accordingly sent off with a letter, expressing our wish to pay our respects to him at his villa; and the answer being most obliging, we left our snug quarters at Hainfeld on the 16th of October, at four o'clock in the morning. As there was nothing in the Archduke's note which related to dinner, we were left in some doubt as to the hour. He had simply stated that he hoped to see us shortly after noon, and we naturally supposed we were expected to take our dinner, or "mittagsbrod, as the Germans call it, with his Highness. Some authorities said he would of course dine at twelve, the common hour in the country—others said, surely he will dine at his usual Vienna hour of two; and in the end, we resolved, very indiscreetly, and like young travellers, to aim at reaching the vineyard at the latest of the two periods, and to take our chance.

We stopped at a place called Knass, to breakfast, and to pick up a pair of fresh horses, which the ever-considerate Countess had sent on for us. As we carried with us bread, milk, eggs, and tea, and as the coachman who went forward with the relay had taken care, at my suggestion, to provide boiling water, which is the most difficult thing

possible to be procured in those countries, we made a capital Frühstück, as they call it in Germany; "Früh" being early, and "Stück," a piece, or bit.

Thus refreshed, we again started in a cloud of dust, which, however, had it been twice as dense, could not have hid the surpassing beauties of the valley through which we wound our way. Even thirteen months of drought, unrelieved except by a few transient thunder showers, had not been able to tarnish, or to do more than slightly tarnish, the lustre of scenery which, in its prime vigour of foliage, must be very striking. But the rapid advance of autumn had wrought a material change in the aspect of things since we passed through the skirts of the same forest a fortnight before. Then, a slight but decided tinge of yellow had been cast rather carelessly over the woods, and here and there we could spy a tree, the leaves of which had been turned to blood-red, but still the greens in their manifold variety predominated over all. Now, the yellows and the reds had it hollow, and many single trees, as well as an occasional grove on some exposed knoll, had been stripped of every leaf. In general, however, the drapery of the forest remained entire, and shone with a brilliancy which reminded us of the magnificent autumn in the eastern States of North America.

We reached the town of Marburg at noon; but as it had been filled with strangers, collected from the neighbourhood on account of the vintage, which was in full progress, though a full month earlier than usual, we had great difficulty in getting any one to attend us. We were happy at last in being received at the Sun, though it was the fourth in rank of the inns of the place. Still more difficulty had we in getting fresh horses, so that it was about one before we were fairly under weigh and on the road to the Archduke's villa. The acclivity at last became so steep, that the postillion declared the horses could no longer drag the carriage, and he pointed out a short cut through the vines, which he said would lead us to the house.

After toiling and panting up what seemed more like a flight of steep steps than a walk, we were received at the

top by the Archduke John himself, who, without his hat, had run out to meet and welcome us. There was so much natural courtesy in his manner, that we felt quite at home with him in a moment.

His Imperial Highness is a very pleasing person, about fifty-five years of age, with a fine, high, bald forehead, and an expression of quietness and repose, bordering on melancholy, in his countenance, which is singularly engaging. His conversation and manners, too, are so untouched by the slightest shade of affectation, and withal so cordial, that every one must feel at ease in his presence.

We soon began to discover that we had unfortunately made a great mistake in our calculations as to dinner, for the Archduke, it appeared, had dined at noon, as he always does when living at his vineyard. But on going into the drawing-room of the cottage,—for it was no more than a country box,—we were not a little surprised to find a long table laid out with a cold collation, and at least a dozen covers. There was cold venison in slices, cold turkey, cold ham, and cakes of all shapes, with fruit and wine in abundance. We naturally connected this preparation with our own arrival, and when the Archduke asked us if we were disposed to eat any thing, we said we certainly were fully prepared, as we had taken nothing since breakfast, forty miles off, and eight hours before.

But cold meat and dry bread or sweet biscuits form a sorry dinner, after such a drive as we had made amongst the mountains of Styria; and long before our appetites were half satisfied our jaws ached, and our throats became as parched as the roads we had been travelling over. We felt amazingly disposed to say to his Imperial Highness, "Don't you think you could manage to get us a basin of soup?" But those horrid etiquettes which hold all mankind in terror, restrained us, and we continued packing in the slices of ham and turkey as one crams things into a trunk that is already too full.

The nature and extent of this collation puzzled us exceedingly, as they were totally out of keeping with every thing else in the establishment, which was quite simple and cottage-like. Nor was it till towards the end of our

visit, that, in the course of a walk we took over the vineyard and through the wine-pressing establishment, we discovered the cause. On turning an angle of the road, we came to about a dozen carriages, and fell in with many groups of visitors, this being the Archduke's weekly reception day; and we now came to understand that the collation into which we had made such deep inroads had been prepared, not for us, but for the country neighbours who came to pay their respects to his Imperial Highness. He, however, said nothing to us in the way of explanation or apology—in fact, he had not asked us to dinner, but finding us hungry, had given us all he could, and of that we made the most.

He gave us, however, what was of more substantial importance, namely, a set of directions for travelling in Upper Styria, with which country he is intimately acquainted, and where he passes a considerable portion of the year. His residence, he told us, and pointed out on the map, is at a place called Vordernberg, where he takes the active superintendence of some extensive iron-works, which he invited us to examine, promising to be our guide.

In conversing about our projected tour in Upper Styria, we fell into a number of collateral topics; and I think I have seldom met with any persons who appeared so thoroughly well informed upon all he professed any acquaintance with, or whose knowledge seemed to be more general and exact. It is true he is a prince; and we insensibly, and perhaps instinctively, give more weight to merit in such a quarter than we might do if we found similar attainments and talents in a lower sphere. On the other hand, the very circumstance of his being so peculiarly, and some people might say disadvantageously placed, tends to sharpen the jealous observation of those who converse with him. So that, in fact, his elevated rank exposes him to a much more severe scrutiny than he would have to endure if he belonged to a lower station. But the Archduke John of Austria need fear no such cross-examinations—for what he really knows, or thinks, he gives out with such perfect frankness, that every one is

convinced of the entire sincerity of his opinions, and places reliance on his statement of facts. Without the least fuss or ostentation, he is allowed by all who know him to be the most obliging and friendly of men. His early life was passed in active and extensive intercourse with the world, both as a practical statesman and a soldier in command of armies. Latterly, while merely a country gentleman and man of science and letters, his innate good taste, and remarkable good sense, combined with genuine public spirit, have rendered his many excellent qualities extensively current in Styria, where he almost constantly resides. An unworthy person placed in his situation would soon be found out, like a base coin gilded, which the friction of the world soon expels from circulation. But a truly virtuous prince, like pure gold, acquires from the discipline of society a fresh impress and a sterling value which fit him more and more for the uses of the country in proportion as he becomes known.

The Archduke John who, many people think, ought to have been made governor of Styria, has been allowed to remain a simple citizen of the state, except, indeed, that he has long been at the head of the engineer department of the Austrian army. In his humble and quiet capacity of a country gentleman, he has done an immense deal for Styria, and perhaps all that could have been done under its peculiar circumstances. He has set agoing numerous agricultural societies, which have greatly improved the cultivation of the whole province. He has also established a splendid museum at Gratz, and endowed lectureships which embrace many useful branches of knowledge. But the chief good he has done, as I understand from well-informed Styrians, has been by making himself personally acquainted with almost every man in the country, and encouraging all classes to persevere in their respective callings with industry and cheerfulness. He is, in short, like a good landlord of an immense estate, whose chief pride and pleasure lie in advancing the welfare of his tenants. The Archduke's exertions, indeed, are even more disinterested, since but a small portion of the whole is his own property.

It is perhaps a pity that there is no chance of his becoming Emperor of Austria, since most writers seem agreed that a pure despotism, if administered by a thoroughly virtuous and able man, is not only calculated to conduce to the present happiness of its subjects, but may give, in such hands, the best chance for the gradual introduction of those ameliorations of which the system is capable. It answers no practical purpose, either to demonstrate that a system of government is bad, or to introduce reforms so unsuitable to the tastes and habits of the nation, that they take no root. The history of Austria, under the Emperor Joseph, uncle to the Archduke of whom I am speaking, shows too clearly that the evil is merely aggravated by premature or ill-judged changes. But were a truly patriotic and observant man at the head of such a state as Austria, he might have it in his power (or at least so it is supposed by many people), without the formidable machinery of a revolution, to establish many improvements, calculated not only to endure and become national, and to do good in themselves, but to spread wider and wider the circle of genuine and legitimate reform, in the sense of amelioration. In the mean time Austria is prosperous, chiefly because, after a long period of war, and every kind of political disorganziation, she is allowed the most perfect tranquillity; and with certain exceptions, which I shall take an opportunity of pointing out, the country enjoys a degree of contentment which is very remarkable, all things considered, and especially when many circumstances are taken into account, which in our eyes are revolting in the highest degree.

Some months afterwards, in the spring of 1835, we had an opportunity of availing ourselves of the Archduke's obliging invitation to pay him a visit at his iron works in Vordernberg, which lie deep amongst the hills of Upper Styria. As Vordernberg is elevated sixteen or eighteen hundred feet above the country we left, we came in contact with the snow, not eternal snow and great glaciers, it is true, but good honest snow wreaths, many feet deep, and continued from the preceding winter.

As we had made a sad bungle of our visit the autumn

before, we took care to be better informed this time as to his Imperial Highness's habits; and having on this occasion, as we thought, ascertained the exact minute when he dined, we drove up to the door at least half an hour before the time, thinking to be invited as a matter of course. We were much mistaken, for after ringing repeatedly, the door was opened by a venerable butler-looking domestic, who seemed mightily puzzled by a carriage full of company coming upon him at that moment. As he said the Archduke was out, I gave him my card, and was just driving away, when a secretary sort of man, with spectacles on nose and pen in hand, came flustering into the rain, which was pouring on his bald pate. He seemed to know perfectly who and what we were, and lamented that his Imperial Highness was not at home.

"I suppose," added he, in a half doubting, half suggesting voice, "I suppose you will dine at the inn; after which the Archduke may have returned, and be ready to receive you."

Here, then, for the second time, were all our fond hopes of a dinner with the Archduke knocked down, and we drove to the worst possible inn in the worst possible humour. The day was wretched: the rain fell in torrents, the hills were encumbered with mist, the ground lay bathed in mud and melting snow ankle-deep. The only thing in the way of victuals which the house could provide was miserable weak soup, so tinged with saffron that no one could get beyond the first spoonful: and we sat in a cold, comfortless, dark, naked parlour, waiting till the horses should be sufficiently rested to bowl down again into the civilized world.

At length I bethought me of an expedient to pass the time, and sending for the landlord, I begged to know what was to be seen in Vordernberg.

"Oh!" cried he, "you can take a view of the smelting furnaces, and see the process of preparing our beautiful iron for the markets of all the world—there is nothing like it any where else."

And without giving us time to make any remark, he ran off, calling out as he went, "I'll send out instantly and

learn when they will be ready at the nearest forge to draw off the metal."

In ten minutes more we were all under weigh on a voyage of information, it could hardly be called of discovery, still less of pleasure; for no one but a farmer takes delight in rain, and it fell upon us now in a style to have gratified the heart of the thirstiest husbandman in Styria after a twelvemonths' drought.

Be this as it may, we had to paddle through the mud over our shoe tops, under the guidance of a most obsequious landlord, who, with a huge red umbrella, guarded one of the ladies, while a strapping lass, who acted the part of waiter at the inn, carried my daughter in her arms as easily as if she had been a kitten. It was pleasant to get under the shelter at last. The workmen, who waited only for our coming, dashed their bars against the closed orifice of the furnace, and gave vent to the molten iron. In one instant the fiery torrent flowed out in a manner wonderfully resembling in miniature the eruptions of Vesuvius we had witnessed the year before. So much so, that I would really recommend any one wishing to explain the nature and appearance of a stream of lava to those who unhappily have never had the grand pleasure of beholding that noblest of all terrestrial phenomena, to carry his friends to a large smelting furnace, and there begin his lecture on volcanic geology.

Whilst we were enjoying this sight, and amusing ourselves by tracing analogies between it and the volcanoes we had seen, and listening to the explanations of our host and the workmen, the Archduke's secretary—he of the spectacles, who had given us the broad hint to take dinner at the public house—burst in, breathless, upon us—said he had been chasing us over half the village to present his Imperial Highness's compliments, and to say that he would be glad to see us at his furnace, after which he hoped we would do him the pleasure to dine with him at four o'clock.

This communication brightened our prospects; and as the Prince's furnace was close at hand, we again sallied forth in the rain and mud, and were most kindly received

by the Archduke himself at the door of his workshop. There we saw a second eruption, and enjoyed the benefit of a fuller and clearer, and more scientific explanation of the whole process than our host of the Garter could give us. We now learned that the said host had all along known privately that we were to dine with the Duke—not Duke Humphry, as we had begun, with great reason, to fear—but with Duke John, who at last, as if to make up for our cold fare at his vineyard in the autumn before, gave us a capital feast.

I may perhaps be excused for naming the dishes, in such an out of the way and unpromising corner of the globe. There was fish, which they called trout, but it was more like salmon, and being just taken from the stream, and cooked to a second, it was superb. There was venison, too, from the adjacent hills—not mock venison, such as they gave us in Hungary—but venison fit for an alderman; and last of all, a souflet worthy of Very's or Beauvilliers', all racy and hot, and well served, without fuss, and quite becoming a noble Prince who chooses to live retired from the world.

The fates had decided, however, that although we should have the honour of dining with his Imperial Highness, he should not dine with us; for it appeared he had already dined at noon, according to the fashion of the spot. But he sat down to table with us, and conversed in the most agreeable style, confirming the opinion we had originally formed, that a more simple-mannered, or more agreeable and well-informed gentleman is very rarely to be met with in any rank of life, or in any country in the world.

The Archduke John conforms to all the habits of the people about him; and being the chief in wealth and importance of the great mining proprietors at Vordernberg, he uses his influence—and most successfully—to render the population happy and prosperous. Previously to his settling there, the miners had been for ages in a state of bitter rivalry, and almost of open hostility; but he, in a quiet way, and so as to wound no man's pride, soon proved to them that each and all would gain more by a cordial union of interests, and companionship in labour, than by

pulling and tearing in opposite directions. The blessings of national peace, which were beginning to be felt in that unhappy country, came opportunely in aid of the Archduke's benevolent and public-spirited measures; and I understand, from those who know all the circumstances well, that there is not in the world a happier, or more flourishing set of people, than these miners now are. It was pleasing to see that wherever this amiable Prince appeared, the people stepped forward and kissed his hand, not with an air of servility, but of cordial respect and attachment. Indeed, it was difficult to recognise, under the coarse dress, and simple manners of a miner, the leader once of mighty armies, in the fierce contests which his country had waged with Napoleon; and still a man of the highest rank and consequence, in whose veins runs the noblest royal blood in Europe!

The Archduke, as I have already said, passes most of his time in the country, residing at Vienna only during a certain number of weeks, which are considered indispensable, and according to etiquettes from which not even he is exempt in that most formal of courts. His chief occupations are, first, superintending the operations of the great trigonometrical survey of Austria, of which, as chief of the engineer department, he has long had the entire control; secondly, directing the great iron works at Vordernberg; and, lastly, visiting his estates in Lower Styria, where his extensive vineyards are situated. His chief amusement is the arduous and rather dangerous hunt of the chamois goat; a sport which in that country takes—and, I am told by good authority, well supplies—the place of our fox-hunting; only it is described as vastly more laborious, and requiring its admirers, of whom the Archduke John is one of the most passionate, to live for days together amongst the glaciers and eternal snows of the Alps.

Another of his amusements is the encouragement of science at Gratz, and elsewhere in Styria; and as he sets about every thing in the most unpretending way, and by his gentle and elegant manners conciliates all parties, his knowledge on these subjects is received not with jealousy or suspicion, but with that degree of personal favour which

insures the success of every undertaking to which he wishes well. Upon the whole, there probably have been few men in any station, and not many princes, who have proved greater benefactors to their country. Very few men, indeed, have the means, even if they had the disposition, and talents, and experience requisite for so great a task ; and it is in the highest degree pleasing to witness the effect of so fortunate a combination of circumstances in the person of one individual.

I forgot to mention that the Archduke John, instead of marrying an ill-favoured, starched princess, out of some foreign land, and from some cold motive of family or personal ambition, or tortuous state policy, chose to himself a wife from those ranks amongst whom it is his taste, and what he feels to be his duty, to pass his life. At the time of our visit to the Archduke's vineyard, we could not speak a word of German, while the lady could not speak a word of any thing else; and as at our second visit she did not make her appearance, our personal acquaintance is but small. But nothing surely can be more satisfactory than to know, that if the Archduke had taken the survey of Europe—as he probably did—in search of a partner, he could not have chosen more wisely for his own happiness; and if this be so, how well may he not afford to set the court etiquettes, and all their quarterings, at defiance !

During dinner at Vordernberg, the Archduke entertained us with an account of the peculiar nature of the iron-works in that neighbourhood. We already knew that the iron of Styria was not only extensively used on the continent, but was sent in large quantities to America. He also explained to us that this was chiefly due to the chemical advantages given to it by nature, over most of the irons in Europe, including even the Swedish and the English. The combinations which nature makes, may indeed sometimes be imitated by art, but seldom so effectually, it seems, and not often without an expense which gives a preponderating advantage in commerce to such places as Styria, where an important part of the work is ready done. The Archduke at least told us, that although the English beat the Styrians hollow in the processes of refining iron, in making some

kinds of steel, and especially in the manufacture of tools and all kinds of cutlery, still they are not able to compete with his countrymen in the markets of Europe, in consequence of the native excellence of the material found in the mines of Vordernberg.

"There is a tradition," said he, "of very long standing amongst our miners here, which speaks to this point. When the barbarians from the regions north of the Danube drove the Romans from this province of Styria, then called Noricum, the Genius of the Mountains, willing to do the new inhabitants a favour, appeared to the conquerors, and said,—'Take your choice: Will you have gold mines for a year?—silver for twenty years?—or iron for ever?' Our wise ancestors, who had just begun to learn the true relative value of the precious metals, by ascertaining, practically, that their rude swords were an overmatch for all the wealth of the Romans, at once decided to accept iron for ever!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GERMAN LANGUAGE.

On returning to Hainfeld, after our first visit to the Archduke, at his vineyard, we found that our indefatigable friend the Countess had cut out fresh work for us, in the shape of a tour in Upper Styria, which she urged us to make before the season should set in so severely as to render travelling disagreeable. It was now getting late in October, and an occasional touch of frost, even in the low situation in which we were, made us shudder when we thought of encountering the Alpine roads of the upper province. But the Countess pressed the matter so much, and she had made so many preparations, that, as we had no particular objection, except what arose from our being remarkably comfortable where we were, she prevailed on

us to say we should set off in one of her ladyship's light carriages, on the 20th of October.

The Countess's professed object in sending us upon this expedition to the hills, was to show us the beauties of the grander parts of her adopted country, and to give us the means of becoming acquainted with a far more manly and intelligent population than that of Lower Styria, of which alone, as yet, we had any knowledge. But I now verily believe that the good lady's real object—though probably unavowed even to herself—was to induce us, by any means, to spin out the time till the winter should arrive, and fairly block us up in her castle for the season.

For the present, however, our jaunt was interrupted by the slight illness of one of the children, and likewise by a change of the weather from mild to bitter ; and as these causes co-operated to detain us from day to day, we finally gave up our intended tour, and resolved not to leave Hainfeld for any such minor purpose, but to remain quiet till ready to start for Vienna. We made our arrangements accordingly for setting off on the 10th of November, thinking that a visit of nearly six weeks, with such a party as ours, was quite as long as we could decently propose to make. But in this estimate we reckoned without our hostess; for when, on the first of the month, I ventured to mention the subject to her, and said, that in ten days or so, we meant to set off for Vienna, I thought the good old lady would have expired on the spot. Indeed, so earnest were her entreaties for us to stay, and so touching the appeals which she made to us not so soon to desert her, just as she was becoming acquainted with ourselves and the children, that, having really no particular motive for going away, we agreed to remain a little longer.

"Oh ! do not say a little longer," she exclaimed ; "do—oh, do make up your minds to stay the winter here. You know not what it is to travel in winter in Germany ; it will destroy your children, and you yourselves will have no pleasure in it. If you are not perfectly comfortable here—if there is any thing in the world that money will provide—do, I entreat you, mention it. My sole wish is to make you happy here, and to enjoy, as long as I can, the

society of my country-folks; for I feel—I know—that you are the last of them I shall ever see. Human nature cannot long stand out against the accumulation of sorrow and of bodily disease with which I am pressed to the earth; and it would be cruel in you to deny me the only pleasure now left me in this weary world. You will have plenty of time to travel in Germany next summer."

I don't know how far these appeals might have proved effectual, had we not found ourselves very agreeably situated in the old castle, or had we been called upon by any pressing duty to go elsewhere. But as amusement was our only motive in travelling, and as nothing could be more entirely to our mind than the style of life which we were allowed to pass at Hainfeld, we felt half-inclined to take the Countess at her word, and fix ourselves under her roof for the whole winter. But this, upon reflection, we could not help thinking would be rather too strong a measure, and might prove a gêne upon all parties, on farther trial. After a good deal of deliberation, therefore, we finally compromised matters by naming the 1st of December as the day of our departure, instead of the 10th of November. To avoid further discussion, which I saw agitated her, I wrote our determination on a slip of paper, and sent it. In a few minutes I received the following characteristic answer:—

"My Dear Sir,

"Every day Mrs. Hall and you bestow on me, I receive gratefully as a blessing. Had Heaven and you vouchsafed to grant my prayers, you would have nestled in poor Hainfeld as well as you could, till the breath of spring invited you to launch into the world. Faithfully yours, "P——."

Thus, for one month more, at all events, we were to be domesticated in our very snug quarters; and as the Countess no longer urged us to make any expeditions from home, we set about amusing ourselves with what was at hand, and fell into regular habits, which every day tended so strongly to confirm, that before long we ourselves be-

gan to look to the period of our departure with almost as much regret as the poor Countess herself did.

The even tenor of our own happy life in this remote and retired corner of the world, furnished but few prominent points of interest for narration. At first the Countess could not imagine that we, who had been so much in the busy world, could possibly be happy without further society than what she herself and our own family afforded; and in order, as she said, to relieve the solitude of Hainfeld, she invited all sorts and conditions of people to visit her. Some of these, whose visits, unfortunately, were short and far between, proved uncommonly agreeable and useful acquaintances. Others were of such a milk and water description that they merely came in our way. While again, one or two rendered themselves so particularly disagreeable, that had the Countess not ejected them we must have speedily ejected ourselves.

Although, as I have mentioned, she was irrecoverably bed-ridden, our poor hostess possessed an acuteness of judgment, which in a great degree supplied the place of locomotion, and gave her, by some means or other—the machinery of which we could never perfectly discover—a most exact knowledge of all that was passing in the castle; so that nothing was said or done but she seemed to know of it. What was still more unaccountable, she possessed a sort of magical power of getting at what was thought and felt by all her guests. If she exercised this kind of surveillance over her chance friends, it may be supposed that we sojourners did not escape. In fact the whole energies of her mind were evidently employed, night as well as day, in trying to discover how best she could make our situation so agreeable to ourselves that we should have no wish to move. With all her discernment, however, it was some time before she fully admitted the fact of our being most happy when most alone; that is to say, with no other company but herself;—though the genuine modesty of her mind could by no means allow her to imagine it possible that her conversation could supply, and amply, too, the place of a more extended circle.

People may differ greatly as to the true import of the

expression "being well employed," but if a person's time be fully and agreeably filled up, and no obvious duty is neglected, it cannot, I think, be otherwise than usefully employed. Be this as it may—our chief, and indeed almost only occupation, properly so called, at Hainfeld, was the study of German.

We had been not a little humiliated on the occasion of a visit to the great quicksilver mines of Idria, to find ourselves quite helpless. In fact, we were virtually deaf and dumb; for French, and every other language of which we had any smattering, proved totally useless, and at last, after in vain trying to explain to the people at the inn that we wished something to eat, I remember being reduced to the necessity of sketching an egg, and then making signs for breaking and eating it! After this adventure of the egg, I made a vow that I would learn German, at whatever cost of labour. This was a rash vow, as almost any person will find who tries the experiment, and one which will be sure to prove a very weighty undertaking to those who, like myself, have unfortunately not only no knack, or facility, for learning languages, but have organs so constructed as to render the acquisition of any foreign tongue a work of real difficulty, and that of German well nigh impossible.

Every one remembers the story of the Minister's horror, when, after a life spent in eager pursuit of office, he for the first time beheld his secretary approach with an enormous bundle of papers. But I question if his dismay was greater than mine, when, within an hour after I had made this magnanimous resolution about the study of German, I encountered the following formidable words in a newspaper:—

PRIVILEGIUMSVERZICHTLEISTUNG!
SUBARRENDIRUNGSVERHANDLUNG!!

But I was consoled by the reflection, that scarcely any thing is so difficult as it looks, and that if the trouble was great, great was the reward, and so forth. In aid of these common places, I found I had the eager en-

couragement of the Countess, who was enchanted with my resolution, and offered to be my preceptress—an offer which made the natives who were present smile; for she herself, good lady, spoke a very strange dialect, which, though as they said abundantly intelligible, was any thing but pure German.

In other countries a few years' residence, and even a few months, are sufficient to enable gifted—often ungifted—people to speak the language fluently and correctly. But this will not do in Germany, even in the case of the most gifted. Madame de Staël describes the labour in strong terms:—

"Une étude très légère," says she, in her magnificent work on that country, "suffit pour apprendre l'Italien et l'Anglais; mais c'est une science que l'Allemand."*

Now the Countess, who was not very young when she came to the country, and was by nature no linguist, and probably had never much leisure to make a scientific study of the language, contented herself with learning merely enough to serve on those occasions when French would not answer her purpose, as it generally would in the fashionable society of Vienna. With the charming literature of Germany, however, she had made herself intimately acquainted, and as she had enjoyed the personal acquaintance of many of the distinguished authors who have flourished in that country since the end of the last century, there could not, in many respects, have been a better instructor than she was. Unfortunately, however, it was scarcely possible that a less creditable pupil could have been found, and the progress I made under her tuition was wretchedly small. I got up at six o'clock every morning, and read hard till breakfast-time at my grammars and dictionaries, and afterwards worked for several hours alone, and always for at least an hour with our accomplished German governess. In the middle of the day I went to the Countess's room, where, under her direction, and by her aid, I read Kotzebue's plays, or some other easy work. I also learned numberless fables by heart; talked to every native I could get to listen to me;

* De l'Allemagne, Partie II. Chap. IX.

and, in short, took a world of pains, but all to little or no purpose, excepting that I derived much pleasure from reading some of the German authors, and in particular the plays of Schiller.

It is indeed a curious fact, that in German it is easier to understand verse than prose, a discovery which I made long before I read the following remarkable sentence in Madame de Staël's book:—"L'Allemand est peutêtre la seule langue dans laquelle les vers soient plus faciles à comprendre que la prose," which, as she goes on to explain, arises from the necessity of shortening the sentences to adapt them to the poetical measure; whereas in prose, where no such necessity exists, the periods often extend for more than a page, before the key-word is reached, without which the involved sense cannot be unlocked.

It was not till I had spent nearly a year in Germany, and after I had read, written, and spoken Germany with much diligence and the most constant opportunities of hearing it in the country itself, that I learned, with no small mortification, that I had all along been proceeding on a wrong system, and that the methods which I had found sufficient to give me a certain sort of knowledge of French and Spanish in Europe, and of Hindostanee and Malays in the East, were totally inoperative when applied to the formidable German.

By good fortune, however, I fell in with a truly philosophical professor of German at Paris, M. Ollendorff, author of a new and most luminous method of teaching that language. He soon satisfied me of what I had indeed myself begun to suspect, that German, to be understood properly, must be attacked exactly like mathematics—and that as there is no "royal road" to knowledge in the one case, so is there none in the other. I gave a sigh or two over the ten months' labour I had almost entirely thrown away, and commenced the study anew through the medium of M. Ollendorff's method, which well deserves the title of the Euclid of German.* After six

* Nouvelle Méthode pour apprendre à lire, à écrire, et à parler une langue en six mois; appliquée à l'Allemand; Ouvrage entiere-

months' close application, I can venture to pronounce that by his method alone, so far as I have been able to understand the subject, can this very difficult, but very charming language, be taught without confusion. To those who, like me, have none of that readiness by which, instinctively as it were, foreign tongues are breathed in by some people, and are made use of seemingly without effort, such a method is quite invaluable. By it the scholar advances step by step, understands clearly and thoroughly every thing he reads, and as he goes on, he becomes sensible that all he learns he retains, and all that he retains is useful and practically applicable. At the same time, he scarcely knows how he has got hold of it, so slightly marked are the shades of daily progression; and so gentle is the rise, that he feels no unpleasant fatigue on the journey. Of course the student is called upon to exert no small degree of patient application, and he must consent to devote a considerable portion of his time to this pursuit; but he will have the encouraging conviction that every particle of effort is well bestowed.

I wish I could persuade this admirable teacher to publish his work in English and in England, and to fix himself in London, where his abilities, his knowledge, and his skill in teaching so difficult a language in the most agreeable and patient manner I ever witnessed, would soon earn for him the distinction he deserves. I write in these strong terms of M. Ollendorff's method, because I feel convinced that a familiarity with it would go far to spread the knowledge of this delightful language in England, where, of all countries in the world, it is most likely to be duly appreciated. The almost matchless beauties of German, not only from their own excellence, but from their analogy to those of our own literature, and the great similarity of character between the two people, are calculated to produce a much greater effect with us than elsewhere. Independently also of the wholesome pleasure which belongs to an elegant pursuit, the study of German

ment neuf. "Par H. G. Ollendorff. Paris, chez l'Auteur, 67 Rue de Richelieu, et Barrois fils libraire, 14 Rue de Richelieu, et Heideloff et Campe, 16 Rue Vivenne."

may do much good, not only by the generous cultivation of the national taste, and the vigorous exercise of individual thought which it requires, but by its placing within our reach an immense store of mental merchandize, in exchange for which the labour of six months is the cheapest possible payment.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAY AT HAINFELD.

The footsteps of time fell so lightly at Hainfeld, that I find it difficult to mark their traces; for after we had consented to remain a month longer, at the Countess's earnest entreaty, we began to consider ourselves really at home, and to take those regular measures for our comfort and occupation, which it is impossible to think of when the hot fit of the traveller's fever is upon us.

We breakfasted in our own apartments, and as it was established as a by-law that nothing should there be spoken but German, we found it a most amusing meal. The children soon got far a-head of their parents, and spoke with ease and correctness, long before either of us could make even part of a sentence out. The facility with which young organs take up new sounds, and employ with perfect correctness, and, as it were, instinctively, the most complicated rules of grammar, is truly astonishing. This arises, in part, no doubt, from their minds being unencumbered with too many ideas, and from their judgment not being entangled by too great a fastidiousness in the arrangement and expression of their thoughts. At all events, they readily find the means of saying, with unconscious accuracy, whatever they please, while their seniors hesitate, lose patience, and become confused in their vain endeavours after correctness.

I should have mentioned, that before breakfast I had

every morning to make a written report to the Countess of the condition of all our party. The circumstances which gave rise to this arrangement are as follows:—

I have already stated, that our hostess, though confined to bed, contrived to make herself acquainted with every thing that was going on in the castle. But she had too much taste, as well as too much good sense, to carry these secret investigations into our private apartments. Yet it was precisely to what passed there that her chief curiosity, or rather her chief anxiety, was now directed. She took it into her head that my little boy, then somewhat more than a year old, was rather delicate in health,—though, in fact, he was as stout as an infant Hercules; and she took similar fancies with respect to the others, and sometimes honoured Papa and Mamma with a little equally groundless alarm. Now, as a considerable portion of this excellent old lady's night was passed in weary watchfulness, in consequence of her painful maladies, she generally —though without the shadow of a reason—worked herself into a double degree of fever about the children before morning came. At daybreak, accordingly, old Joseph, the butler, used to be summoned to her bedside, in order that he might report if there had been any remarkable stir during the night in our wing of the castle—any calls for assistance—any message for the doctor; and when the old soldier smiled at all these inquiries, and said he believed we had all slept like tops, he was scolded for his inhumanity, and despatched to our quarters, to learn, if possible, whether we were dead or alive.

The honest fellow, who took the direct and soldier-like method of going straight to his point, rapped at my door, and stated that the Countess having the day before heard the young Graf, or Count, as the servants persisted in calling the poor boy, cry twice; or having observed one of the young ladies look pale, was quite uneasy till she could know how they had passed the night. This message rendered it necessary that I should go to the nursery to ascertain how the case stood, and thus I was often called upon to disturb both the young Graf and his sisters, and the old folks too, long before the fitting hour; and after

all, Joseph's report, we found, never satisfied the Countess. It was either too incomplete for her curiosity, or too full for her anxiety, by the details suggesting fresh alarm. So that, when one of us went to her room, as usual, about ten o'clock, we generally found her under some extraordinary delusion as to what was passing with us. So strongly sometimes did these fancies affect her, that she believed she knew much better what we were doing, than we did ourselves, and frequently she wished us to send for the physician, or to persuade us to let her doctor the children, though they had been, and still were, in perfect health!

All this might have been laughed at, so far as it concerned ourselves; but as it seriously affected the Countess's peace of mind, I bethought me of a device which corrected most of the evil, and gave her infinite pleasure. I offered to send her every morning an official written bulletin of the health of the whole party; and as I had by this time learned her taste for the details of domestic gossip, and observed the singular accuracy and minuteness of her information respecting every other department of the castle, and indeed of the whole estate, this was not difficult. Having thus elected myself her ladyship's spy extraordinary upon my own family, I completed the circle of her secret knowledge by reporting every single thing that passed in our apartments.

The visit which one of us always made to the Countess, about ten o'clock, was merely for a moment to wish her good-morning, or to furnish her with any farther particulars she might be anxious about respecting the preceding night. She took that opportunity of asking when the carriage would be wanted to give the children a drive, or what we should like to have for dinner; in short, whether there was any thing within the compass of Hainfeld or fifty miles round which we had the least wish to obtain. For example, she one day heard my eldest girl say she liked chocolate for breakfast; and though there was a very good sort to be had in the village of Feldbach, hard by, it was not nearly good enough for the Countess's notions of hospitality. So a man was actually despatched on horse-

back, at three o'clock next morning, to Gratz, between thirty and forty miles off, to procure a particular kind of chocolate made according to a receipt of the Princess of Salms. In like manner, when she found that some of us preferred tea to coffee, she was not content with what the village, or even Vienna could produce, but wrote off instantly to a merchant at Trieste to send her, not a pound or two, but a whole chest of the best and most recently imported tea!

Our protests against this sort of extravagance were all in vain; and when, one day, I incidentally threw out some allusion to the inroad we were making upon her establishment, she rang the bell, sent for the Verwalter or bailiff, made him bring her the last month's accounts, and took a world of pains to satisfy me that we cost her scarcely any thing additional.

"See," she exclaimed, "all the meat, poultry and milk which are used in the house, come from my farm; even the flour which makes the bread, is sent from my mill—the vegetables are from my garden, and the fuel from my own forests. The other expenses are quite inconsiderable."

So far did this generous old lady carry her notions of hospitality, that she wished even to pay our postages; and I think she was a little hurt because we took measures to prevent the shopkeepers at the village from inserting all our purchases in her accounts, according to her secret directions.

After the short visit we paid to the Countess about ten o'clock, we returned to our rooms, while she "got up," as she good-humouredly called making her toilet. This operation—to other ladies a pleasure—was to our poor friend, all of whose movements were accompanied by suffering, a most painful and protracted task. After what I have mentioned of her taste and habits, I need scarcely say that she dressed in the old style, but always with much neatness; and being bolstered up by some eight or ten pillows of different forms and dimensions, she received her company almost as if she were sitting. As the bed, too, was rather low, her face came just on a level with

those of her visitors, and as she had no deafness, the conversation was carried on quite as easily as if the party had been sitting in a drawing-room. Her bed, which was unusually wide, was divided into two compartments; one of these she occupied herself, the other presented a strange mixture of order and confusion. As her curiosity about every thing in the external world, from which she was now shut out, had rather increased than abated by her inability to follow its movements in person, she applied herself with great diligence to reading all sorts of books, and her friends being well aware of her desire to see every thing new, took care to furnish her whatever works of merit appeared. In like manner she had newspapers sent to her from every quarter; and in spite of all she said about the pain and difficulty of writing, she contrived to keep up an active correspondence with persons who, knowing her love for information and gossip, supplied her plentifully.

Like most people, she fully intended to read every book and pamphlet which came to her, and conscientiously resolved to answer every letter. Like the rest of the world, however, who possess greater activity than she could boast of, she redeemed this pledge to her conscience, by doing little more than glancing over the books, reading the leading articles in the political journals, and replying to one letter in ten. In ordinary life this leads simply to more or less remorse, fresh resolutions, to be again broken, and a degree of disorder amongst one's papers, dependent on the habits of the individual. Other people may run away from the arrears of their unanswered letters, and uncut books, but the poor Countess, being chained to her bed, was obliged to allow the huge accumulation to be always beside her, like a permanent nightmare. I have counted in one file three dozen unopened publications in English, French, and German, besides pamphlets innumerable, and endless files of newspapers. I shudder sympathetically, when I recollect the bundles of docqueted, and the pyramids of undocqueted letters; nay, not unfrequently of unopened letters, of several weeks standing. In addition to this vast chaos of unstudied literature, stale news, and

truncated as well as embryo correspondence, lay a sea of accounts. There were the "farm accounts,"—the "house accounts,"—the "miller's accounts," interspersed with a perfect snow-storm of bills, receipted and unreceipted, mixed with Austrian bank-notes, and here and there a bag of silver money, all in most admired disorder, destined never to be read up!

The Countess, it must, however, be stated, was by no means careless or disorderly in her arrangements; but she undertook more than she could by possibility perform; and as her independent spirit rejected all assistance from clerks, "dames de compagnie," or other agencies by which old age sometimes attempts to do the work of youth by proxy, her business and her pleasures—such as they were —necessarily accumulated work beyond the power of her feeble hands to discharge. When a book or letter, or pamphlet, was required, the bell was rung, and her maid Pepe, a very clever person, sent to the farther side of the bed to search for it. The abigail had address enough on these occasions, so far as she could take the liberty unobserved, to put things a little to rights; but it would have been a labour of hours or of days to arrange matters properly.

Had the Countess been laid up in this fashion in any other country, she might have heen finely pillaged by the people about her; but there is an innate good faith and resolute integrity about the Germans, which leads them, as a part of their nature, to adopt fair dealing in every thing. We had many opportunities of remarking this admirable characteristic of the nation, not only during our residence at Hainfeld, but afterwards in travelling through other parts of the country; and I hope one day to be able to give some interesting and instructive instances in point, which occurred to us in the course of our subsequent long journey.

Until noon, we seldom saw any thing of the Countess, except during the short visit about ten o'clock, which was occupied, as I have said, chiefly in explanations of points in the bulletin of the night, and in settling what we should best like for dinner. The interval between that hour and

mid-day was spent by us in studying German, writing letters, superintending the education of the elder children, or finally in putting young Master Basil Sidmouth de Roos to sleep. As the comfort of the afternoon depended essentially, as I shall explain presently, on this small gentleman's getting a sleep in the middle of the day ; and as he took it into his head that nobody but his Papa could, or at all events should, hush him to his morning's rest, I was obliged, partly on account of the peace of the family, and partly on that of the Countess, to enact the part of under nursery-maid for half an hour, almost every forenoon for some months.

It is not so easy as those who have not tried the experiment may suppose, to hush a child of fifteen months to sleep. The business, indeed, was not quite new to me ; but as I found my present task much harder than it had ever been before, I was obliged to have recourse to additional methods. One of these consisted in singing, as well as I might, a drinking song I had once heard in a coffee-room in Ireland. As I had not a single note of music in my soul, or at all events in my throat, I had nothing for it but to follow the example of the monks who, in a similar case (I do not mean in hushing babies, but in chaunting offices), use a deep groan or grunt as a running bass. To my little man, however, this seemed the most charming melody possible ; and no sooner did he hear the sounds, than off he went in as deep an accompaniment as his tiny organs would admit of, which he continued till the soporific monotone set him to sleep.

This habit of his led to rather a ludicrous scene some months afterwards, at a village near Saltzburg, called Berchtesgaden. We had been attracted to the church by the sight of a grand procession, and on entering with the crowd, found the priest celebrating a marriage. All went on soberly till the ghostly father (who had no more voice than I have) began to chaunt some portion of the service. The instant the well-known sounds reached the child's ears, he struck off, at the full stretch of his voice, with my Irish drinking song. The surprise of the whole party was soon changed into mirth, and the first horror of the

priest into such amusement, that he was forced to intermit his chaunt, and join in the irreverent laugh which had spread amongst his hearers.

At twelve o'clock exactly, for she was extremely punctual, I went off to our good hostess's room, where, whatever had been her sufferings during the night, however sleepless, she was sure to be found cheerful, and not only ready to converse, but eager to hear what was going on, and to give her opinion upon every thing and every body, just as if she could still mix in society, and influence, as had been long her wont, the opinions and actions of other people.

Her chief object in arranging this visit was nominally the study of German ; but the lessons, so far as that went, proved little profitable ; for it was scarcely possible for me to read ten words before some anecdote occurred to her connected with her early intercourse with Sir Walter Scott or Dugald Stewart, or her later intercourse with the men of letters in Germany ; or it might relate to Napoleon's occupation of Vienna—or to the details of those ruinous campaigns which swept like Debacles over the fertile provinces of Austria—or the topic might be the fashionable society of the capital, and the endless intrigues of the court—or, finally, she would branch off into some speculation on the magnificent literature of her adopted conntry, or that of France and England, with all of which she appeared to be equally familiar. On each and all of these topics, and twenty others which I have not mentioned, she conversed with equal readiness, and always in the most lively and appropriate manner, never lugging any story in by the head and shoulders—never exhausting any thing, or dwelling a moment longer upon any topic than exactly suited the taste of her company. Her memory seemed to be boundless ; and I have often deeply regretted since that I had not—Boswell fashion—taken some notes of her conversation ; for almost all her anecdotes possessed an intrinsic general interest beyond their mere point, from being connected with men and things in which all the world are concerned.

At one o'clock, or half-past one, my post by the Coun-

tess's bed-side was taken by Mrs. Hall, sometimes alone, and sometimes accompanied by one, or at most two of her other guests, of whom, during the early part of our visit at Hainfeld, there were generally several parties in the castle besides ourselves. In the mean time, I took a smart walk over the hills, or strolled with the children in the woods, or walked to the village to make some purchase at the omniumgatherum shop which supplied not only the castle, but the surrounding neighbourhood with every article under the sun—great and small—from a needle to a ploughshare.

By four o'clock all the company having returned from their walks, rides, or shooting parties, and dressed for dinner, we assembled in the Countess's room. Generally speaking, as I have already mentioned, she found her strength unequal to sustain conversation with more than one or two persons, but during the half hour which elapsed between the dressing bell and the dinner bell, she liked to see the whole of her guests at once. The greatest number ever assembled, and that occurred only upon one occasion, was eighteen; but generally the numbers ranged from eight to ten or a dozen, including the children, who took all their meals with us. During this period the Countess seldom made any attempt to join in the general conversation, but lay, or rather reclined on her pillows, tranquilly listening to the rest.

When dinner was announced, and we had all left her, she sent for the nursery-maid and the child; and I verily believe that the hour, or hour and a half which followed, were to her the happiest, in the twenty-four. Her fondness for the infant, which was excessive, may have been due, in some degree, to the recollection of her own, an only and most extraordinary child, and all that she had gone through on his account. And it so chanced that our boy took wonderfully to her; and though at first rather frightened by the strange dress, and appearance, and situation of the Countess, he gradually became reassured, and used to sit for hours together on her bed. Sometimes he crept close up to her face, and laid his cheek by hers, in such contrast as to draw many a touching remark from herself,

and sometimes to squeeze out a tear from the more sensitive amongst her friends, who knew her sad history. But she never shed a tear herself, even in relating to us her bitterest distresses. The whole comfort of this visit, so important to the Countess's happiness, depended upon the little gentleman being in a good-humour, and that again turned upon his having had a due allowance of sleep in the forenoon. It was chiefly on this account this I was obliged to occupy myself in contributing to his morning nap, in the manner I have already described.

One hears of very wonderful children in most parts of the world; but I am not sure that I ever heard of one who excited such unqualified surprise as the Countess's son. While his mind appears to have been of the most masculine and matured strength, even at a very early age, his bodily frame is described as one of extreme feebleness and delicacy; and though some people have supposed that the Countess, who devoted her life exclusively to him, may have hurt him by over-anxiety, I have learned from good authority, that he owed his daily life—so to speak—to her unceasing care; and that such a hot-house plant was he, that, had she for an instant relaxed her attentions, he must have dropped at once into the grave.

I could relate many anecdotes of this singular boy, which I heard during my stay at Hainfeld; but I prefer giving the direct testimony of an eye-witness, who I am sure, from all I have learned, rather understates than overstates the fact. The following quotation is from the Travels of J. C. Lemaistre, Esq., published in London in 1806, vol. ii. p. 358.

After giving rather an interesting sketch of the Count and Countess Purgstall, he proceeds as follows:—

"They have a son who seems to have inherited the talents of his parents, while, like them, his person is slender, and his health delicate At five years old this wonderful boy, who may fairly be considered as a prodigy, has read various books of science, is well acquainted with history and music, and is so versed in geography, for which he has a particular turn, that he has lately, without

any assistance, made a map of Venice for Mrs. Lemaistre, which I mean to keep as a curiosity.

"I begged him yesterday to tell me how I should return to England without touching on the Hanoverian, French, or Dutch territories, and he instantly traced on the globe the only remaining road. He sits on a carpet, surrounded with his books; and when the gravest and most acute remarks fall from the lips of this little person, a spirit seems to speak rather than a child, and the fine expression which sparkles in his countenance tends to increase the idea.

"Among other singularities, he has taught himself to write; but as his models were printed books, he prints his letters, and begins from the right hand instead of the left. He was born at Vienna; but having been attended from his earliest infancy by a nurse from Aberdeen, he usually speaks English, or rather Scotch, his accent being completely northern. He also understands the German and French languages, the latter of which he acquired with inconceivable facility. He is a phenomenon; and should he live and continue to make equal progress in knowledge, he will rival the fame of Sir Isaac Newton."

He did live for some years afterwards—indeed, till the age of nineteen—and made astonishing progress in knowledge, especially in mathematics—so much so as to excite the admiration of his learned connexion, Dugald Stewart, into whose hands some of the boy's papers had been sent by his mother after her son's death. Mr. Stewart writes in the following terms:—

"I can no longer delay expressing to you my admiration of the truly astonishing powers displayed in these manuscripts. I have certainly never seen any thing which, at so early an age, afforded so splendid a promise of mathematical genius; and yet I am not sure if they convey to me a higher idea of the young writer's philosophical turn of thinking than some of his speculations, which have been several years in my possession, on the metaphysical principles of the modern calcul.

"When I combine all this," continues the learned Professor, "with the specimens of poetical talent which

I have seen from the same hand, and with what I have learned through various channels, of his many other accomplishments—above all, when I reflect on the few and short intervals of health he enjoyed during his little span of life—I cannot help considering him as the most extraordinary prodigy of intellectual endowments that has ever fallen under my knowledge.

"If I were addressing any one else," concludes the Countess's affectionate brother-in-law, "I would say much more. But how can I dwell longer on this subject in writing to the mother—and such a mother!—of such a son!"

I shall merely remark here, before resuming the description of our daily occupations at Hainfeld, that if the merits of the poor forlorn Countess's child were of such a high order as to engage so remarkably the attention of every one who knew him, far and near, we can easily understand how her own distress at his loss was so deep and irremediable.

All these things, and their accompanying associations being considered, we can the better sympathize with the over-anxious and tender solicitude which she showed about a stranger's child and its Scotch attendant, accidentally thrown in her way, and under her protection.

When dinner was over, the party split into various divisions. Some one always went to the Countess, to remain a shorter or longer time, according to the humour she appeared to be in; and on that person coming away another went to her, so that she was never left alone. As we, being permanent guests, considered ourselves the Countess's chief attendants, and were certainly, after a trial, the persons who best understood her wishes and her fluctuating state of health, and were most in her confidence as to her likings and dislikings, we endeavoured to arrange the evening so that those casual visitors should be most with her whom she was most anxious to see; and that those whose conversation was not the most agreeable, should be accompanied by some one better suited to interest her.

While the mistress of the house was thus employed in

receiving her guests, one by one, in turn, the rest of the company were occupied in different ways. The children and some of the younger and merrier part of the company generally waltzed round the billiard table, to the sound of an old worn-out harpsichord, and rather to the annoyance of the gentlemen who were knocking the balls about. Others established themselves in the little parlour, near the only open fire-place in the province of Lower Styria, and betook themselves to the newspapers, or to books imported from the adjacent library in which the tea-table was prepared.

Later in the evening our hostess's amusement, and a very great one it proved, was listening to the Waverley Novels, some of which she had never read. This was varied by an occasional poem of Lord Byron's, or a scene of Shakspeare's, or, if politics ran high, by a peppery article from some London newspaper. We had no English newspapers, it is true, but only reprints in Galignani's incomparable Messenger, a journal without which the Continent would be utterly uninhabitable by any Englishman who cares a straw for affairs at home, of which he can hear little by any other means.

Nothing, in short, that was striking and original, or exciting, in politics or in letters, from whatever quarter, or in whatever language, came amiss to this most energetic of old ladies. Reading aloud to her in some shape or other was soon found to be preferable to conversation in the evening; for such was her animation, and the liveliness as well as fertility of her fancy, and the ready copiousness of her memory, that she could never long remain quiet. Thus it too often happened, that she exhausted her strength before it was time, as she quaintly said, "to go to bed;" and in her case, as in that of many robuster persons, it required strength to be able to go to sleep. We had therefore frequently the mortification of learning in the morning, that owing to over exertion to entertain her company, our generous hostess had not herself once closed her eyes during the whole of the weary night.

On Tuesdays and Fridays, in the evening, the post

came in, generally many days after becoming strictly due. This arose from the bag being carried by a lumbering cart which wandered over half the country, dropping its cargo by the way at all the different country houses in the valley of the Raab, and ending its long journey with ours. But after a little time we fell into such an agreeable routine of domestic habits, that so far from regretting the tardiness of these communications with the external world, we came to consider even this bi-weekly post, as Jonathan would call it, rather a teazing interruption. We often felt ourselves, indeed, gradually relapsing into a state of indifference as to the affairs of the busy world lying beyond the limits of our "dreary solitude," a disparaging epithet which was applied to Hainfeld—not by us—but by its mistress herself, to whose broken heart and blasted hopes it had so long proved a desolate and lonely abode. To us it was quite the contrary; for we could truly say, that during no part of our lives had we ever felt less alone, or more completely contented and happy, that when our whole society became comprised in the person of our matchless Countess!

One evening when I was sitting with her ladyship, the letter bag came in, and was as usual delivered into her hands. Of the four or five packets which it contained for herself, she reserved only one for immediate perusal, putting the other less fortunate despatches amongst her innumerable books and papers on her left, where, in all probability, they lay many days, or it may have been many weeks, unopened.

"But this letter," said she, "will interest both you and me, as it is from Edinburgh—I pray you to read it to me."

I took it accordingly, and broke the seal, but for my life I could not make out a single line, though it was evidently written in a plain hand. I opened the window shutter to its full width; but still could not see to read. I then discovered that although there was still a bright glow in the western sky, the pure daylight had been exchanged for that uncertain twilight, which to some optics is almost tantamount to no light at all. I had more than

once before begun to fear that I had reached the age when this description of weakness first becomes sensible. I said so to the Countess, and begged her leave to ring for the lamp. "Yes! yes!" cried she, laughing heartily, but begging pardon for doing so—"Do ring for the lights. I don't wonder to hear you complain of this twilight blindness—you have it by inheritance; and, for that matter," added the old lady, laughing still more, "I ought to have it by connexion.

"You know," she continued, "or perhaps, you do not know, that my brother-in-law, Dugald Stewart, had not the faculty of distinguishing colours at any time; and, like your own father Sir James, he absolutely lost his sight when this sort of twilight set in. It is a most curious fact," she went on to say, "that Dugald Stewart could not see any difference even between colours so strongly contrasted as the ripe mulberry fruit and the leaf of that tree. Yet the practical inconvenience of this singular defect in the retina, if such it were, was nothing in comparison to what he suffered from becoming blind when the day was nearly at a close.

"I was laughing just now," said the Countess, warming with her topic, as she always did when any thing carried her thoughts back to Edinburgh, which was fifty times a week—"I was laughing at the recollection of a funny scene I had with your father and Mr. Stewart at least half a century ago. We had all been drinking tea with my excellent friend the Reverend Mr. Allison, who had then a house in Bruntsfield Links. My two companions, the moment thy came into the open air, recommenced a metaphysical discussion the party had been engaged in, and which, from the popular turn which the graceful genius of Mr. Allison gave to the most profound disquisitions, I had been able, in some degree, to understand; at all events, to take great interest in.

"But when your father and Mr. Stewart found themselves alone—for they seemed to consider a young lady as nobody—they dived much deeper into the subject than I could well follow; and to the one or two questions I ventured to put, in search of explanation, the philosophers

made scarcely any answer, but trudged on over the little grassy knolls of the Links, taking no more account of me than if I had not been present.

"As I well knew my companions to be two of the very kindest and best bred men in the world, and that they were merely absorbed in their darling topics, I paced after them in respectful patience, thinking of something else, and admiring as the sun went down, the last touch of bright light on the top of Arthur's Seat, and the flag-staff and battlements of the old castle.

"Presently Mr. Stewart, slackening his pace, drew to my side, and remarked that the golf players had quite destroyed the Links for a lady's walking, and that unless I took his arm I might put my foot into one of the holes used in the aforesaid game. As I found none of the inconvenience to which he referred, and as we had passed most of the rough ground, I begged him not to disturb his philosophical tête-à-tête on my account. But he continued to press me to take his arm. I knew well enough what was the Professor's motive, for I had long been aware of his peculiar optical weakness, and I saw he could scarcely walk a step without setting his foot on a stone, or into a hole; but I was willing, by declining his twilight civilities, to punish his broad day neglect. Sir James, who as yet saw quite well, had no idea what Mr. Stewart was manœuvring about, and even tried all he could, being deeply interested in the discussion, to detach the blind lecturer's attention from me to himself. Mr. Stewart, however, in his fears of a sprained ankle, seemed quite to forget his moral philosophy, much to your father's surprise.

"In about five minutes afterwards, however, I was much amused when Sir James also offered me his arm, expressed in like manner a wonderful anxiety about my safety and comfort, and, as Mr. Stewart had done before him, insisted upon encumbering me with help of which I stood in no sort of need. It became truly a task of some difficulty to lead these two gentlemen, for as neither of them could see an inch before him, I was obliged to act as a guide to both. They, on the other hand, as soon as

they had regained their confidence, through the agency of my pilotage, forgot their sudden fit of gallantry, and once more recommenced their unintelligible disquisitions across my very nose, and without once seeming to recollect that such an individual as their female protector was in existence!"

As one story is sure to beget another, this adventure with the Edinburgh philosophers reminded me at the moment of a very different scene with one of them; and as it amused the Countess, I may perhaps be allowed to introduce it here.

Long after the period described, when my father, no longer a student at the College and Dugald Stewart's pupil, was at the head of a numerous family, he set out in a fine afternoon to walk with one of his little boys. It was his wont, in every thing, great or small, to go straight to his object, and sometimes without duly considering the labour it was to cost, either to himself or his less robust companions. On the occasion I speak of, being anxious to induct his progeny to some of those mysteries of geology which delighted his own imagination, and which he took it for granted the boy would relish as much as himself, he proceeded to the top of Corstorphine, a well-known basaltic hill near Edinburgh. The sun set as usual, but as my father's enthusiasm never set, away he went, lugging the schoolboy after him, who indeed enjoyed the ramble as much as his papa, who was his most agreeable and constant companion.

The point was made out to the satisfaction of both parties; the hill was gained, and the geologist having examined the spot about which he was curious, set about teaching the young idea of his son how to shoot into past ages. For the rest, both were pleased to have had what they called a scamper over the hills.

On turning back, however, it was soon apparent that they had made respectively two very false calculations—my father of the duration of the daylight, and my little brother of the strength of his legs. Before they were half-way down the hill, my father, in the twilight, entirely lost his sight, and though the boy could see well enough,

and knew the way perfectly, he was quite knocked up, and could not walk a step!

In this dilemma, my father, whose ingenuity and resources were not confined to scientific pursuits, readily devised an escape. Being a strong man, and the boy being light, he perched the urchin on his shoulders, and thus, while one furnished legs, the other provided eyes, and they regained their home almost as soon, and much more merrily, than if they had both been on foot!

CHAPTER X.

THE WORSER.

One day when I entered the Countess's room, I observed that she had been writing; but on my sitting down by her bedside, she sent away the apparatus, retaining only one sheet of paper, which she held up, and said,—

"You have written your life; here is mine," and she put into my hands the following copy of verses, by whom written she would not tell me. Probably they are by herself, for they are certainly exactly such as suited her cast of thought. I may here repeat, that in spite of all her misfortunes, and the pains she took to cherish her grief, she was invariably cheerful, and never let fall a hasty or querulous word.

MY LIFE.

My life is like the summer rose,
That opens to the morning sky;
But ere the shades of evening close,
Is scattered on the ground to die.
But on that rose's humble bed,
The sweetest dews of night are shed,
As if Heav'n wept such waste to see.
But none shall weep a tear for me!

My life is like the autumnal leaf,
That trembles in the moon's pale ray,
Its hold is frail—its date is brief—
Restless, and soon to pass away.
Yet ere that leaf shall fall or fade,
The parent tree shall mourn its shade,
The winds bewail the leafless tree,
But none shall breathe a sigh for me!

My life is like the print that feet
Have left on Zara's desert strand;
Soon as the rising tide shall beat,
The track shall vanish from the sand.
Yet, as if grieving to efface
All vestige of the human race,
On that lone shore loud mourns the sea,
But none shall e'er lament for me!

As the Countess had been relating to me the day before, some passages of her melancholy history, and pointing out, in very touching terms, the entire desolation of her life, and the utter ruin of all her fondest hopes, I could not help admitting, when she asked me what I thought of the above lines, that they painted her situation but too truly: "Though," I added, "they surely do injustice to the many attached friends you still possess."

"You are very good," she said, sighing and shaking her head; but instantly continued, with a smile—"I should be wicked to complain, for although my path has been a thorny one, and all those I loved and cherished most have been torn from me, there has been no dishonour to them nor to me; and the past is unclouded by any remorse, or any thing not in itself pleasing, however melancholy to look back upon. You remember," she went on to say, in her usual animated style,—"You remember the old story of the *Worser?* For my own part, I often think, with great gratitude to Providence, how much worse off I might have been, though I have successively lost all the friends I most loved in the world, and am here laid on my dying-bed—for die, and that shortly, I believe and hope I shall—a broken-hearted, helpless, useless old cripple."

I stammered out some commonplaces about hoping that

she was still to see many useful and happy days—happy at all events to her friends. She took no notice of these remarks, but continued, in a tone rather more melancholy than she had used before I interrupted her, in the following words:—

"I take rather an interest in hearing stories of persons who are still worse off than myself; and you, too, may possibly be interested in the following narrative, for the truth of which I can vouch:—

"A lady and gentleman several years ago were living at the Hague; they had been for some time married, and were justly reckoned amongst the happiest of the happy. Particular business called the husband away. Shortly afterwards the wife received a letter by express, stating that her husband was dangerously ill; and that she must use the utmost despatch if she hoped to see him alive. No time was lost, but on approaching the inn she was met by a funeral, and learned, to her unspeakable horror, that the hearse before her contained the dead body of her husband! She fainted in the streets; but when the funeral had passed on, the people were at a loss what to do with her, not knowing who or what she was, nor even her connexion with the gentleman who had died; for when she recovered from the fainting fit, her reason had fled. A benevolent lady, however, who witnessed the whole scene from her window, ran down into the street, and desired that the unfortunate woman should be carried to her own room.

"For some weeks her mind continued unsettled, and she seemed unconscious of every thing, except that some dreadful calamity had happened. At length her senses returned, and with them a full comprehension of her loss. Her grief became outrageous and uncontrolled, and she constantly exclaimed, 'I am the most wretched, the most unfortunate of women—surely never, never was there any one put to such a trial.' For a little while her unknown but kind friend did not attempt to stem these bursts of grief, but at last she said to her, mildly, though firmly—'Your lot is hard, but you are not the most unfortunate of mortals. Listen to my story. I, too, was a happy, happy

wife. My husband and I had passed upwards of twenty years in the uninterrupted enjoyment of life, in companionship with our two children, a son and a daughter, who were in every respect what we could desire. To our infinite horror and amazement, we discovered that a villain in our own establishment, a man in whom we had trusted, had, by a series of diabolical arts, seduced the virtue of our poor girl! He fled from our vengeance, and his wretched ruined victim died shortly afterwards in childbed. Meanwhile her brother, who was of a delicate frame, and of a sensitive temperament, was so wrought upon by sorrow and humiliation, that he speedily fell into a decline, and we saw before us another inevitable source of grief.

"'To avert the blow, however, as long as possible, a journey to the south of Europe was recommended, and the grateful air of a more genial climate seemed to revive the drooping spirits of our son. One day he entered a coffee-house, and had scarcely sat down before he beheld the destroyer of his sister placed before him. Stupified, and uncertain what to do, he remained silent, while the other at once broke into taunts, allusions, and reproaches. This was too much for human nature to stand, and our poor boy, snatching up a knife, which unfortunately lay within his reach, plunged it into the heart of the monster who had ruined the peace of a whole family.

"'Of course he was instantly secured. The trial followed, and in spite of all the extenuating circumstances which were urged, he was condemned, and, dreadful to relate, executed! My husband returned to me from the horrid scene apparently calm and unmoved. We felt it our duty to support one another under these terrible dispensations, sent upon us, no doubt, for our good, by the wisdom of a Power whose ways are inscrutable. The next day we had agreed to take a drive together; but after my husband had handed me into the carriage, he said he had forgot something, for which he must return to his room. I waited for five or six minutes, and then becoming alarmed, I ran up stairs, and found that he had put a period to his existence!

"'Judge now, therefore, my dear madam, whether there may not be more unfortunate women in the world than you are.'"

The Countess being in the vein for relating anecdotes—as, indeed, she almost always was when there happened to be no particular subject under discussion—said, after a short pause,—

"You think that rather a painful tale. I fear it was but too true. I'll tell you another, however, which is not so gloomy, the particulars of which I have repeatedly heard from friends on whom I can perfectly rely. It would be difficult, I suspect, to invent circumstances so little in the ordinary way of life; but I think I can safely assure you that all I am going to tell you took place.

"One summer evening, in a pretty little village on the pleasant banks of the Tweed, a gentle tap was heard at the door of the schoolmaster's house, which was the first of a line of new buildings at the end of the 'Toon,' as the natives called it. The schoolmaster, who was quite a young man, and just established in his laborious office, opened the door himself, and was rather surprised to see an elderly woman holding in her hand a very pretty person, at whose breast was an infant.

"The old woman begged admittance for her young friend, stating that she was quite exhausted, and would presently expire of fatigue if not assisted. The schoolmaster of course desired them to enter, and taking the child in one arm, gave the other to the young woman, who fainted as he placed her on a chair. The schoolmaster's mother, an old lady who managed the cottage establishment for him, was somewhat surprised to find such a party installed in the house when she returned from visiting a neighbour. But being of the same kindly disposition as her son, she gave the wearied strangers a hearty welcome; and although she said she could not give them such good accommodation as they would have found at the inn farther up the street, she and her son would do the best they could for them.

"Next morning a curious dilemma arose. The elderly woman had silently taken her departure in the night; and

as it soon appeared that the young person who with her child had accompanied her, was both deaf and dumb, no direct means of ascertaining who and what they were presented themselves. The young woman, however, was so pleasing in her manners, so pretty withal, and both she and the child so well dressed, that the schoolmaster and his mother felt an involuntary respect for their mysterious guests, and very soon took such an interest in them, that all thoughts of giving them any hint to retire were out of the question.

"The schoolmaster, as part of his business, had learned the art of speaking on his fingers; and as his mother soon acquired it also, there occurred no difficulty in communicating with the young woman. The first request of the stranger was, that she might be asked no questions as to her history; the second was, that she might be permitted to remain where accident had placed her. And as she made this request, she produced a purse, containing, as she explained, an ample sum to discharge her board and lodging for herself and the child for a year.

"In a private consultation held between the schoolmaster and his mother on this proposal, the prudent old lady strongly objected to such an arrangement, on the plea of its indelicacy, and the hazard in which it might place the respectability of the village school, when it was known that a person of such questionable history had become the schoolmaster's guest.

"The young man, on the other hand, warmly advocated the cause of the forlorn wanderer—rendered doubly helpless in consequence of her unfortunate want of speech and hearing. As to the indelicacy, he said that was an idle notion, as his mother's presence would effectually maintain all the proprieties. The truth was, however, that the schoolmaster, who was a man of birth considerably above his present station, and who had received a first-rate education, was greatly struck with the beauty of the stranger. Moreover, though he did not confess it, even to himself, he had begun to entertain vague hopes that, in process of time, the mystery might be cleared up. Then, thought he, all the proprieties upon which his mother dwelt

might be satisfied in a manner which he scarcely ventured to think of.

"Month after month passed in this way. The stranger became every day more and more amiable, and the mother saw, with a feeling of mixed alarm and satisfaction, that while the young people were becoming daily more intimate and attached, the school was more and more neglected, till at length the boys had it all to themselves. It was soon admitted by all parties that this could not be allowed to go on long; and after one more fruitless attempt to gain from the young woman some notion what she was, or who she was, or where she came from (an attempt which she declared, if repeated, must drive her for ever from them,) it was agreed that a marriage should take place.

"Married they were accordingly, and the thousand and one gossips of the village silenced for the time. The school, which had languished in proportion as the courtship of the preceptor had flourished, now revived; and what was very important and satisfactory to the neighbourhood, a female department was added. In this the schoolmaster's wife taught writing, cyphering, and sewing—her usefulness being necessarily limited by her want of the senses of hearing and speech.

"Her success, however, was astonishing, and the school gained great celebrity in consequence. The discipline she maintained was perfect, for it received the most exact obedience, while it gained for her the regard as well as the respect of her pupils. The shrewd ones amongst the young folks used often to assert, when alone, that the mistress must only be pretending to be deaf, as she appeared to discover, with a kind of intuitive accuracy, all that they said near her. But the numberless experiments which they made to entrap her only tended to establish that it really was no pretence. Finally, all suspicion on their part, as well as on the husband's, if indeed any had ever existed, gradually died away.

"In the mean time, she became the mother of seven children, besides the girl who had been with her at the time of her first appearance, and who always called her

mamma, and was treated as a daughter by her. I should mention that the old woman, who had accompanied her on her arrival, paid her and her children a visit of several days once a-year, and on these occasions she always brought with her a purse of money similar to that which the young woman had produced on the morning after she was received by the schoolmaster.

"One or two attempts to win from the old lady some trace of the young person's mysterious history were met by such earnest entreaties not to inquire into the matter, and threatenings of such an alarming nature, that after the second year no further questions were put to her, and every thing fell into a regular, successful, and happy train. No persons could be more attached, no family more flourishing, and no business more satisfactory than the joint school.

"The gentry of the neighbourhood were naturally much interested in this strange story, and still more interested in the heroine of it, whose manners, as I have already mentioned, were those of a much higher rank in life. But they tried in vain to induce her to visit them, and she stuck resolutely to her school and cottage duties.

"On the fourteenth anniversary of her arrival, when the old woman made her periodical appearance with her purse of gold, the girl who was called, and who probably was, her eldest daughter, chanced to pass unobserved through a room in which this old person and her mother were. To her astonishment, and even horror, she heard her mother speak. Greatly alarmed and confused, she ran to her father, as she always called the schoolmaster, and communicated the wonderful news to him. He desired the girl to tell no one else, and said nothing himself till the night came, and every one had retired to bed.

"He then told his wife of the discovery which had been made, and entreated her to bless him with the sound of her voice.

"'You are very wrong,' she said, 'and you will deeply rue this breach of our solemn contract. You have heard me speak once—you shall never hear me speak again!'

"He tried every art—he prayed—he wept—but all in vain—till at length, quite exhausted, he fell asleep.

"In the morning his wife was no longer by his side. He rose in alarm: the house was searched—all the grounds—the desolate school—she was no where to be found, and the only thing like a trace was the uncertain report of a peasant who had seen two females running out of the village at midnight.

"This afforded no clue, however, and the poor man was left in despair. As his heart was wellnigh broken, his business no longer prospered. The girls' school, after a few vain attempts at a substitute for the spirit that had fled, was given up. The other branch fell into neglect, and the whole fortunes of the poor man seemed crushed under the weight of this misfortune.

"His only consolation was in his family; but this endured not long, for before the year was out, first one and then another fell sick, till, just at the period when the old woman was wont to make her appearance, every member of the young family was laid up with measles or some such complaint, several of them being at the point of death. The utmost anxiety was of course felt to know whether the usual visit would be paid, and great was the joy of all when the old woman appeared. As she entered the door, she held up her bag of money, not knowing the condition of the children.

"'Of what use is your base gold?' exclaimed the wretched father. 'Look at this sight—look at these motherless, deserted, dying children!'

"The old woman, struck with horror, threw down the money, and fled. In less than a week she returned, leading back the mysterious deserter, whose presence and attentions soon restored all the party, young and old, to health and happiness.

"But what excited unbounded wonder in the minds of her family, and every one else, was the circumstance of her now speaking and hearing perfectly, and of her no longer refusing to go into society.

"The husband, it may be well imagined, after the severe lesson he had received, never again approached the mys-

terious subject with his wife ; and as no other person ventured to take such a liberty with her, the secret was never even guessed at. The nearest approach to it—indeed, the only faint glimmer of light which was ever shed upon it—arose from the circumstance of her accent being slightly Irish ; whence it was inferred that she may have belonged to some distinguished family in that country.

"After this period—strange to say—the old woman never came back ; and as the lady herself—for such all who knew her admitted she must have been—was carried off by a sudden illness, some years afterwards, the seal of permanent mystery has been set upon this singular adventure."

One may perceive in this wild tale not a little of what is called the German fancy. It is curious, indeed, to remark, that such had been the effect of her long familiarity with the writings of that imaginative country, that the Countess delighted in such involved and mysterious stories, and, as it were, in spite of her own more sober judgment, gave them credence. She assured us, accordingly, that the above circumstances were well authenticated,—though, it must be confessed, they look much more like what might have occurred on the banks of the "dark rolling Danube" or the Elbe, than by the side of the merry Tweed, albeit, in times past, not unacquainted with romantic incidents.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BORE.

ALTHOUGH the even tenour of our existence at Hainfeld, the most hospitable of all castles, afforded small matter for narration, there occurred every now and then incidents, which, though sufficiently insignificant when compared to the great events of life, possessed considerable importance in our eyes by their effect on our comforts

at the time. A musquito is a very little animal, but where is the philosopher whose patience might not be buzzed or stung out of him by one of these wretches attacking him during the whole night? In like manner, there may be found tormenting little animals of the human species, wholly insignificant as regards their usefulness, but omnipotent in their powers of tormenting others. Who is there that is not acquainted with a certain number of Bores, to meet any one of whom at a party, or in the streets, for five minutes, is a punishment only tolerable, because we know the misery is transient? But think of the intense agony of having to live in the same country-house with a finished Bore! In town one may escape, or other persons may be got together to smother the monster; but in the country, where there is no escape, and where it is difficult or impossible to dilute the evil by gathering together persons of a different stamp, the calamity becomes almost too great for endurance.

We were once exposed to the smarting of this grievance at Hainfeld, for so long a time, that at last (as in the parallel case of the musquito) we wrought ourselves into a fever of impatience and distress, unworthy, it must be admitted, of rational persons under such circumstances; but the misery was not the less real on that account.

Our friendly hostess, in speaking of the various persons who were likely to come to the castle during the winter, with or without invitation, had frequently mentioned to us the name of a lady with whom she had at one time been rather intimate, but whose acquaintance, from a variety of circumstances, had become no longer agreeable. "I have done every thing I can," said the Countess, "to cut her, and prevent her from coming to Hainfeld, but I have not been able to accomplish my purpose; and as the customs of the country permit any one who pleases to enter and abide in your house, it is very difficult, with a person who will not take a hint, to rid oneself of such a guest.

"I only hope," continued the old lady, getting animated with her topic, "I only hope to goodness that she will not come upon us during your stay, for I fear you would never agree. It is possible," she added, "that you folks

who have seen all parts of the world, and love to examine curious specimens of humanity, may be interested by this sample, but I doubt it; for, although she is very well informed and learned in her way, she generally contrives somehow, in spite of very great efforts to please, to render herself universally unpopular with all classes, low as well as high; and you will laugh when I tell you of a curious result of this extensive feeling against my quondam friend.

"One of the plagues of my unfortunate situation," continued our hostess, "is the difficulty I find in managing the crowd of servants I am obliged to maintain in my castle. It is always bad enough when there is not a master in such an establishment; but it is still worse when the mistress is bed-ridden, and from not being able to see into matters with her own eyes, must take the report of others. In short, you will easily conceive that I have no small work to keep things smooth amongst my domestics; and for some years, indeed ever since I have been laid up entirely, half my time and more than half my temper, have been spent in settling their foolish quarrels; so that, until you came, I have scarcely known any peace on this account, excepting only," added the Countess, laughing, "when this obliging friend of mine came to pay me a visit. For, you must understand, that she is so cordially hated by all the servants, that whatever hostilities may be waging amongst them, or whatever real or imaginary sources of discontent may be stirring their tempers, and sending them to spout their angry recriminations to me, all is forgotten the moment this doughty personage arrives! A treaty of cordial alliance, offensive and defensive, on the ground of common ill will, is instantly patched up among them, and for the time, I hear no more of them and their absurd bickerings.

"It is true," said the old lady, with a shake of her head, and a tone of more bitterness than we had previously remarked in her, "that as a set off for this repose below stairs, I am liable to be tormented, not with their complaints of one another, but with my unhappy guest's complaints of them. When irritated by her statements of their negligence or impertinence, I summon my people to my bedside, they fully admit the facts as set forth, and

justify their conduct by asserting the utter impossibility of living on any tolerable terms with the individual in question."

Just before this conversation, we had been discussing the point of our stay at the castle, and the Countess had been urging us to give up what she called our absurd and cruel intention of going away on the first of December, and to make up our minds to remain at all events over the new year; but the discussion had been interrupted by something. I resumed it by saying that I trusted, if we did agree to stay so long, she would manage to keep this she-dragon away from us.

"I shall do what I can," she replied, "but I suppose you would not wish me to write to say you make it a stipulation with me, that if you remain, she is not to be admitted?" Whatever we may have thought, we expressed ourselves duly shocked at such a proposition, and entreated her not to think of taking such a strong step on our account.

"Why," she said, "you need not be so horrified, for I should feel little scruple on my own part, as I am already obliged to do something of the sort, in the case of a distant friend who sometimes visits me, and who makes it a condition that this lady shall not only not be invited, but that she shall not be permitted to put her foot within the doors during his visit!"

Happy would it have been for us and for all parties, had we too made a similar condition—but it seemed scarcely within the rules of good breeding to suggest such a thing, or even to permit it; and we passed from the subject, under the hope that something would turn up to save us from such a visitation.

While we were yet speaking, a letter came to the Countess from the dreaded person herself, and she opened it with fear and trembling. It was to state the lady's regrets that owing to the illness of one of her family, she could not at present have the pleasure of coming to Hainfeld, but that she hoped soon to be at liberty to do so.

"It is all over with us!" cried the Countess. "I know the meaning of such a letter as this. She will be here before the week is out. I do not really know how to help

it. Perhaps," sighed she, "you may like her very well after all; for there is not a person alive who makes greater efforts to render herself popular; and if she does not always succeed, nature is in fault, not the lady. So pray give her a fair trial."

She came accordingly; and surely never was there any one who looked the character better, or who, in all possible respects, enacted the Bore more truly to the life. Her voice, harsh and unmusical to the last degree of discord, might be thought melodious in comparison with the jarring elements of her conversation; and what made this worse, was the unceasing exigence of her curiosity, which made her wish to join in all that was passing, and to give her opinion unasked upon every topic. She seemed, indeed, to possess an ubiquity the most wonderful; for sit where you chose, talk in as low a voice as you might, still she would contrive to get at you, and to intrude her stale, flat, and unprofitable commonplaces upon you. If you escaped, to have a quiet chat tête-à-tête with the Countess, she was by your side. If you returned to the library, there she was re-established before you. If, in order to avoid talking, you took volume first of a book, she got hold of volume second, and insisted on comparing notes, or anticipating your story, in spite of your teeth. If you wished to read aloud in a retired window to a single person, straightway the Bore dragged a chair into your retreat, popped herself triumphantly down, and cried out, "I'll be your public—read on!"

Amongst her other accomplishments, this good lady was very learned in the tongues, and had taken not a few lessons in English. But, Oh, ye gods and goddesses, what English she did speak! No written account can convey an adequate idea of sounds so horrible, and yet you could see that she prided herself particularly on her proficiency. Until we resolutely put a stop to it, she laid all and each of us under contributions to improve her stock of words. First she tried to elect me to the honourable post of teacher; and when I fought shy, she attacked the ladies of my establishment: but the discouraging reserve with which her advances were there met threw her upon a young officer of the Austrian army, a

countryman of ours, who, from not being so much accustomed to the world and its ways, knew not how to disentangle himself. She made the poor youth listen for hours together to what she obligingly called reading English—a fact which no one could have dreamed of, had she not informed him that such was the language she was Burking. Then she brought him to correct long foolscap sheets of exercises, also in this unfortunate, unknown tongue.

Her desire, in short, to show off, and her possible unconsciousness that she was giving pain instead of pleasure, induced her to follow us into whatever corner of the castle we betook ourselves. As to giving hints, or showing by our looks and manner that we wished to be alone, it was useless. She would not take offence; which invulnerable property led a Gratz wag to remark of her, that while some people are thin skinned, and others thick skinned, she seemed clad with the hide of a rhinoceros. If, on the other hand, in a sort of despair mixed with remorse, we tried the plan of being remarkably civil, it was instantaneously taken such savage advantage of, in the shape of fresh intrusion, that we were speedily driven back to our coldness and formality. At dinner all conversation was at an end; for if you spoke to your next neighbour in the lowest whisper, though the Bore was seated at the farthest angle of the table from you, her quick ear caught up what you said; and before your question was well out of your mouth, she, and not the person it was addressed to, would oblige you with an answer.

I have already adverted to the kind of omnipresence which belonged to this insinuating personage, which made all parties in the house complain that she was always by their side; and, accordingly, when at night, and driven to desperation, we fled to our rooms, and compared notes, every one was ready to swear that she had never once intermitted her companionship. Most fortunately, we began on the very first day by declining her offers of walking with us, and many a weary roundabout it cost us to avoid meetings in the woods.

In process of time the annoyance I have but very faintly described became almost unbearable; and as nearly all our pleasure in the visit was at an end, in consequence,

we began once more to think seriously of taking our departure. On the other hand, the good Countess every day urged upon us her increasing anxiety that we should stay till the spring, or at all events till after the new year; and, indeed, we felt ourselves so very comfortably lodged, with the sole exception of being bored through and through like an old target, that we had the greatest reluctance to break up our snug winter quarters, in order to seek a very questionable enjoyment at Vienna.

One day when the Countess was pressing us hard upon this point, and claiming our sympathy—as well she might—on the score of her gradually declining health, and the vast addition our party made to her comforts, I said to her, playfully, that if she would only rid the house of a certain person, our minds might easily be made up to remain some time longer.

"That *is* a motive, indeed," quoth the old lady, sighing; "and difficult as the exploit may prove, I trust we shall be able to accomplish the task of dislodging her. But," continued the Countess, "she is like a bur. She comes into the house, and sticks, and sticks, and pricks every one, but cannot be got rid of. I have already given her a dozen hints, but all in vain."

In fact, we found that the poor mistress of the house had been long pondering in her mind how to terminate the visit of her self-invited and most unwelcome guest; more especially as she saw that it was next to impossible that we could or would submit for any length of time to this daily increasing annoyance, which alternately made us laugh and almost cry with vexation. This was too hot to last long, as Nelson said of Trafalgar; and it became evident in the course of a fortnight, that one or the other party must presently abandon the position.

While matters were in this feverish state, it happened, partly by accident and partly by design of the Countess, that a crowd of company came to the castle. The bustle proved however too much for the old lady's shattered nerves; since each person who in turn visited her, though carefully schooled on the subject, presently forgot that although he was not an invalid, he was talking to one; accordingly, some talked too loud, others too quick, and

all, too much; so that the exhausted Countess was almost worn out.

This had the good effect of bringing the campaign, as we called it, against the Bore, to a crisis. The mistress of the house declared to several of her friends, in confidence, but with her wonted decision of manner, which left no doubt of her determination, that she could not possibly, in her present weak and gradually-declining state of health, entertain more company in the castle than her own countryfolks, meaning our party; and that, therefore, she must entreat them to forgive her for requesting them to cut short their visit for the present. Every member of the party so appealed to but one not only understood this, and were pleased with the good old lady's frankness, but promised to do their best to aid and assist in freeing her likewise of the person who, they saw, fretted her life and soul out.

Accordingly, next day, all but she prepared to return home, or to proceed on other visits. The Countess was distracted, and we were in despair; and it now really seemed as if nothing short of the celebrated Irish hint was likely to have any effect. But it was suggested that even the strongish measure of throwing the guest out of the window would have no effect in this particular case, for that she would speedily re-enter the house, thanking you for the air and exercise which the fall and flight had afforded her!

At last, and just before the company dispersed, the Countess, who, though bedrid, possessed much energy of character, resolved to bring matters to a point. In this view she commissioned two of her other and more reasonable guests, to undertake the delicate task of fairly telling the Bore that she must depart. One of these commissioners was a lady, and she managed her part very well; but the other, though one of the ablest men I ever met with in any country, nearly bungled all, and defeated, by his bad diplomacy, the well laid schemes of his colleague.

In the course of the evening he took occasion, as if quite carelessly, to ask the lady whom we were all sighing and dying to get rid of, how long she thought of remaining

at Hainfeld, now the Countess was getting feebler, and could not entertain so much company as formerly?

"Oh!" cried she briskly, "I shall remain here as long as the Halls do." The indiscreet negotiator having thus given the enemy a fixed point to fight from, was effectually baffled in all his subsequent reasonings about the Countess's delicate state of health—her wish to be quiet—her anxiety to hear only her own native language spoken this winter. All this fell flat and profitless on the dull ear that was determined not to be charmed.

The female commissioner took a wiser and more straightforward course. She represented to the lady in so many words, that the Countess, who was a most determined person, and not to be trifled with, had signified her wish to be left alone, or with only her own country people about her. The able negotiator softened this communication by representing, that as the request was general to all the guests in the castle, there could be nothing personally offensive intended; and then seeing that she had made some impression, she followed up the attack by an act of generosity and self-sacrifice worthy of the best times of the martyrs.

"Don't distress yourself," said this most excellent and disinterested person, "as to where you shall go from hence—come to my castle over the hills, and there we shall be happy that you stay as long as suits your convenience."

There was no standing all this, and presently we had the satisfaction of hearing that the enemy had been brought to terms, and had agreed to evacuate the castle. Our joy, indeed, was unbounded; but the old Countess shook her head and remarked, that we must not holla till out of the wood.

Next morning the party broke up. Some went south, some west, some east, but, to our sorrow and horror, none went north—the only point of the compass we cared about. And when the coast was clear of the others, and the sound of the carriage-wheels, and tramping horses, and bustling domestics, no longer heard, we had the mortification to discover that, to all appearance, our evil genius —our bur—our Bore—had not now—and probably never

had had—any serious intention of moving! She had been offered the Countess's carriage, but refused it, saying that she meant to write home for her own; but when the letters for the post bag came to be collected, there appeared no letter in that direction. Thus, the lady's determination to hold on for the winter, became to us more fearfully apparent than ever!

The Countess, however, was not of a temperament to be easily thwarted in what she had undertaken; and seeing how matters stood, she begged to have an interview. "The post," said she, "is such a roundabout and uncertain method of communication in this slow-moving country, that I have thought it would be more satisfactory to you, as it certainly will be to me, to arrange this matter by sending an express. So I have ordered a man and horse to be got ready to carry your letter, and bring back the answer."

It was impossible to resist such a home-thrust as this. The letter was written, the messenger despatched, and the horse trotted out of the court of the castle as if even the very cattle participated in the general feeling which agitated the household.

Next day brought the answer; and, with it in her hand, the unwelcome guest proceeded to the Countess's bedside to make a last and desperate stand; and, had not the old lady been a very Wellington or Metternich in petticoats, she must have been discomfited.

The letter was forthwith read, paragraph by paragraph. It began by a string of compliments and praises of the Countess's liberality, generosity, and above all—hospitality. The reader paused, but as the listener said nothing, she went on.

"You have spoken," said the letter, "of Sunday for your return. Now, unless it be absolutely necessary, no one, you know, should travel on a Sunday."

The reader again paused; the Countess smiled, but was silent.

"In the next place," pursued the epistle, "the chimney of your room smokes so abominably, that you cannot occupy your apartment till the masons who are at work

on it shall have finished ; and you really must not think of coming at this season to a cold room."

The Countess still took no notice.

"Finally," said the writer, "you cannot possibly have the carriage, as it has been sent away, and will not be back for some days; and I fear you cannot well come home in any other, as the chaise seat, in which your things are, will not fit, and it must not be left."

"Is that all?" said the Countess.

"It is all," replied the lady ; "and now what is to be done?—what can I do?

"In the first place," said the Countess, laughing, "your friends know, and you know, and all the German world know, that so far from Sunday being kept holy, as respects travelling, it is universally selected as the fittest day in the whole week for that purpose. But," added she, "not to shock your conscience, you shall name your own day.

"In the next place, you lately told me that you always had the choice of several other rooms, and as there appears to be nothing the matter with their chimneys, you need not be under any alarm, I think, on that score.

"As to the third and last difficulty, I do grant that it is serious, but I shall send for the coachman, and if it appears that your box cannot be carried with perfect safety and convenience, of course you will have to wait for your own carriage as suggested in the letter. But as I apprehend there will be no difficulty in taking the box, I shall be obliged to you, in order to save yourself and me all further anxiety, if you will name the day most suitable to yourself."

Had our fellow-guest's hide been as strong as the armour of Achilles, it must have been pierced by the sharpness of this reply. With a sigh she hauled down her colours, and said,—

"Well, then, I'll take advantage of your ladyship's obliging offer of the carriage on next Sunday morning."

I shall not attempt to paint the joy which reigned in the castle as the news spread rapidly from the library to the laundry, a joy which, however, was suddenly inter-

rupted by an accident which threatened to defeat the whole object of the campaign.

It appeared that our friend, when reading in her own room on the evening of the above memorable conference with the Countess, had set fire to her head-dress, and before she could untie the ribbon, her hand and arm, used in extinguishing the flames, were considerably burned. Thus we had before us the pleasant prospect of a long attendance upon her during her slow recovery. For in common decency, if not in common compassion, we must have given up our prejudices and assisted a person under such circumstances. Now, every one has heard of the amiability of a sick monkey; and a bear with a sore head, as an agreeable companion, is proverbial; but what think you of passing a month by the sick-bed of a burnt Bore!

Thanks to fate, however, and to that blessed remedy cotton, the inflammation was kept down, and on Sunday morning we had the inexpressible felicity of hearing the carriage rattle over the stones; and feeling that we had now fairly got rid of our incubus—our standing nightmare—we sat down to our little domestic church, with hearts filled with much thankfulness—but I sadly fear, with any thing but a spirit of Christian charity, or unmixed good-will towards men.

CHAPTER XII.

QUACKERY—ABSOLUTISM.

I THINK I have already mentioned that the Countess had an unconquerable aversion to all medicines, or, as she invariably called them—drugs. She had suffered much from an illness in Switzerland; and thence had a notion, whether well or ill founded I do not know, that she had been improperly treated by the medical men in that country; and she ascribed so much of her subsequent

miserable sufferings to this cause, real or imaginary, that she not only rejected, with equal disgust, every description of drug, but treated all medical skill with proportionate scorn. There was no theme, indeed, upon which she was more eloquent than the universal quackery of the profession of medicine; but, with a strange kind of inconsistency, she confined her disrespect to the regularly bred professors of the art, while she looked with favour—or at least with interest and curiosity—upon those who, without any of that caution which true science teaches, boldly assumed universal infallibility. One might have thought that she considered the study of medicine as our ancestors did the black art, as something unholy and hurtful to mankind; and, consequently, the deeper any person carried his researches, the nearer he approached to the source of all mischief.

The Countess, however, was far too clever a person, and far too well acquainted with the proceedings of the world, to maintain the above argument in direct terms. She was aware of the sophistry, as a matter of reasoning; but having suffered, as she thought, from the misapplication of the rules of art, she could not help involving the whole profession in the same censure; and certainly, in practice, she showed her sincerity, by never letting a drug of any kind pass her lips.

There lived near her castle, however, a medical man, whose pretensions dazzled her imagination greatly, and of whom she wrote to me in one of the letters I have already given. It may be remembered, that amongst the inducements she held out for our visit was the opportunity of seeing a man who had wrought all sorts of miracles.

I had not been long at Hainfeld before the Countess renewed this subject, and she was evidently provoked with me because I expressed no sort of curiosity to see the wonderful individual, who, if he had not really performed all that was ascribed to him, had certainly persuaded the public—or at least the great numerical majority—that he had done very great wonders. I said to the Countess that I should willingly go to see any professed conjurer play his tricks, and that I should cheerfully pay my money for being well deceived by sleight of hand, but that I could

not scourge myself up to feel any interest whatever in a man who presumed to work medical miracles; and that, as I considered the whole a piece of arrant quackery, only the more mischievous for being extensive, I could not treat the matter with any thing short of the utmost contempt.

I was sorry to see that this strong language nettled the old lady, who it was clear had set her heart upon my having an interview with this Dousterswivel; but I positively refused to visit him, or to do or say any thing which should imply the smallest faith in the pretensions of one who, it was clear to me, lived and fattened upon the diseases and death of others, and who had nothing to produce in his favour but his own confident assurance, and the assertions of ignorant patients, upon whose imaginations he had been working with much greater effect than upon their bodily frames.

"At all events," said the good old Countess, "I hope you will not refuse to see him if he calls here?"

"Bless me!" I cried, "are you going to consult him?"

"I shall let him feel my pulse," she said, "and see my tongue."

"But will you swallow his powders?"

"I have forsworn all powders and every kind of drug, as you know; but, if I were disposed to take any thing, I don't know but what I might try that which has already done such wonderful things. I should be glad," she continued, "to be free from this pain, which wears and tears me to pieces; but, to prolong my weary life forms no part of my wishes; and were it otherwise, I feel too deeply that I am far beyond the reach of any art, or any medicine. If my mind, happily, is not diseased, my heart is broken, shivered to pieces—never, never to be repaired in this world."

A short pause followed this melancholy burst, but she shed no tears; the fountain of her grief had long since been parched up, during what she called her fiery trials. Her grief, indeed, was too deep-seated, and too constantly present to her thoughts, to admit of any relief from its expression. Of course, there was nothing to be said, and I found it the best way, on such occasions, to go on speaking in my usual tone and manner, as if nothing had occur-

red of more than ordinary interest. Before I had time to muster up some commonplace observation, by way of changing the subject, the Countess brought it back to the wonderful doctor, about whom the whole country-side was in a craze, by saying that he was to be at Hainfeld on that day, at one o'clock; "and therefore," she said, "I do beg of you to defer your walk till you have seen him."

While she spoke, the door opened, and in he walked. I have seldom seen a face of more resolute shrewdness; and now that he had fairly come, I confess I felt some curiosity to see to what extent he would carry the joke, or farce, or whatever be the term to give to charlatanry on such an extensive scale. As he was full of his subject, and quite anxious to speak upon it, no great trouble was required to set him agoing; and as we managed to keep our countenances, he may have been encouraged to go on, by the belief that he was making an impression. An impression he certainly did make; but, "I guess," it was not that which he wished to leave. He first dealt in a very startling generalization, by asserting it as an established point, that all diseases which affect the human frame are merely varieties of a certain cutaneous disorder, of which I dare not even write the name before eyes polite, and which, as a Scotchman, I feel it a point of nationality to keep out of sight. In some cases, said our doctor, this malady must be driven in; in some it must be drawn out. In one case, the disease must be assisted in its progress till the humours are matured; in another, it must be attacked and counteracted by antidotes. "In ague," said he, "which is assuredly nothing but a variety of this mysterious complaint, we see the disease escaping from the human body by bleedings at the nose and eruptions of the upper lip, clearly making out my theory."

After a good deal more in this strain, in which he made out his case with equal precision, we asked him about his remedies. This proved a fertile theme, and he rung the changes on nux vomica, belladona, arsenic, and prussic acid, till we stared with the proper and expected degree of wonderment. Calomel he scarcely condescended to mention, as rather too weak—like the Fire-King in the

Strand—who disdains hot water for his drink, and addicts himself solely to boiling oil or melted lead!

When asked how he prepared these formidable medicines, he became less intelligible; and upon our showing that we did not understand, he smiled with much self-satisfaction, and confessed to us that the virtue of his preparations did not consist so much in the drugs themselves, or in the manner in which they were combined, as in the magnetic virtue which he imparted to them. This, I thought, was sailing very near the wind, and I exchanged glances with the Countess, who was lying on her pillows in a state of the highest enjoyment, for she had a nice perception of the ridiculous; and on this occasion her amusement was perhaps heightened by some involuntary traces of faith in the pretender. At all events, she eagerly encouraged the learned German to go on, and begged to be informed whether the magnetic virtue of which he spoke was communicated by the touch and through his hands; and also, how it happened that so subtile a fluid as magnetism, could be arrested and embodied permanently in a packet of powders?

"Oh!" cried the adept, "it is not by the hands at all, but by the force of mind, that I convey to these medicines the magnetic influence which gives them their peculiar efficacy. I feel, as it were, the effort of good will, the strong desire to do good, in my mind, and this is followed by the power of imparting the requisite degree of virtue to these powders, which, if swallowed by the patient in a similar spirit, that is, with undoubting faith in their efficacy, will be certain to effect a cure."

"Whatever be the disease?" we asked.

"Whatever be the disease," replied he. "My existence," continued he, now fully warmed with the friction of his subject, "and that of my patients is closely connected—my life is, as it were, a continuation or link in the chain of theirs."

"That is very odd," we ventured to remark. "But pray how is this connexion manifested?"

"Oh!" cried he, "in various ways. I can tell, at any distance, the very moment when my patients are swallowing my powders. If I write a letter, for instance, to

a person, giving him instructions what powder to take, I can tell, however far off I may be, whether he attends to what I have said, provided he have faith in what he is told!"

This, it will be allowed, was carrying quackery about as far as human credulity can be supposed capable of following. But there seems to reside in the minds of very many persons a morbid confidence in the pretensions of those who are bold enough to assert their claims to infallibility, and have a share of talents and address sufficient to support their claim by a certain degree of success, as well as the most boundless assurance in repudiating all failure as consequent upon their own loudly applauded measures.

Perhaps the charlatan's chance of success—I mean of his gaining his object—is all the greater, if he works his cures by means that are miraculous. For there are always multitudes of persons who have not the power of thinking for themselves at any time, and who, when they fall ill, are still less capable of exercising an independent judgment. If, unfortunately for them, but fortunately for the Dousterswivel of the day, their malady is incurable, and has already been treated by regular practitioners without effect, the quack's chance is improved. I mean his chance of working on the imaginations of his victims—whom he raises from the depths of despair into full confidence and hope. It will often happen in such cases, that the potent drugs which are administered will stimulate and exhilarate the patient for a time, and make him believe that he is cured. Partly from conviction, partly from a natural wish to confirm themselves and others in their own belief, and partly from gratitude, they proclaim the charlatan's fame all abroad; and when at last they discover their mistake—supposing they do not die, which is, of course, the most favourable case for the doctor!—they are ashamed to proclaim their own folly and credulity.

It would be a mere waste of time to mention this personage's exploits in the cure of horses, dogs, cows, and other inferior animals, over which he describes the influence of his powders to be as great as it is in the case of human beings. This is not quite consistent, I should

have thought; as the mind, according to his statement, is the channel by which the charm works. But let that pass;—his success in both cases, I have no doubt, is alike. For my part, the interview afforded me much satisfaction. In the first place, I was amused to the top of my bent; and in the next place, the Countess, whatever she thought, never, from that day forward, urged me to take any further notice of her miracle-working neighbour.

Those who are acquainted with the state of the law in Austria might well wonder to hear of such doings—for poisonous drugs are notallowed to be sold by the apothecaries, and the medical men are held responsible for the lives of their patients. And certainly such things are not allowed in Austria Proper, or in those countries—such as the Venetian states—which are completely part and parcel of her government. The practitioner I have just been describing, however, resided in Hungary, where—although it forms a part of the Austrian empire—the laws in these and almost all other matters are quite different. As he lived close to the frontier, there was no way of preventing multitudes from flocking over to beseech his aid. The little village, therefore, in which he resided became crowded like a fashionable watering-place, and I have seen the roads for many a league covered with carriages repairing to this great oracle of health!

The Austrian Government, had they pleased, might certainly have put down the whole affair. And although I am very far from accusing so paternal a government—for, with all its despotism, it is a paternal government—of wilfully encouraging any thing so utterly preposterous as the quackery I have been describing, yet I have been led to suspect, from a great number of circumstances, which I had an opportunity of seeing or hearing about from good authority during my stay in Austria, that the government, if not avowedly and purposely, at all events instinctively encourages whatever has a tendency to keep the human mind in a state of uninvestigating ignorance.

It is not my present purpose to go at any length into this very curious and characteristic feature of the Austrian system of government. The details are, indeed, long and complicated; but the result is simple, and easily

told. The chief object aimed at seems to be to prevent the human mind coming to maturity. Thus the Government does not merely, by the agency of a huge physical force, keep down the spring of that exertion which the nation, if left at all at liberty, might make to disenslave itself, but it effectually prevents even the wish of the people to be free. This it accomplishes, chiefly, by obstructing, in every possible way, the growth of thought; and by removing all hope of emancipation, it utterly destroys that elasticity of spirits and self-confidence, without which nothing can ever be done in the way of reformation. The country is overspread with troops, and watched by police officers, under the superintendence of whom nothing generous can spring up. It is as if we were to irrigate our fields with boiling water, instead of leaving them to the cool and invigorating rains and dews of heaven. The moral crop in Austria is blighted in the very bud by the vicious system of political irrigation. The bitter bread of abject servitude which it produces, is repugnant to the taste of all who have known better things; and if it be eaten in silence by those who have never left the country, it is the silence of ignorant hopelessness, not the tranquillity of contentment.

To bring a country into such a state is a melancholy affair: To keep it so is a difficult and still more melancholy task. But as the mind is the first and most important thing to be controlled, the most powerful of all moral machinery is brought to bear upon it—I mean Religion. Before adverting, however, to that important engine, I may mention, what indeed most people know, that so rigorous a censorship of the press is established in Austria, that scarcely any foreign books, at all calculated to minister to independent thoughts or feelings, are allowed to cross the frontier; and although the most profligate works ever printed, are, in point of fact, smuggled in, and sold in great numbers, the really good books—those which would essentially improve the nation—are generally unknown. Those books, therefore, which minister to the sensual appetites, and give an impulse and direction to vicious indulgences, are to be found in abundance; while those which teach habits of self-restraint, and cherish manly and vir-

tuous aspirations, are, in point of practice, carefully excluded as dangerous to the established order of things.

I may also mention that no person, be his rank what it may, high or low, in office or out of office, is permitted to leave the empire without express permission, and without entering into engagements to state where he is going, and what are his purposes in going, from home. But the most truly hellish device that the wit of man has yet contrived, is the celibacy of the clergy; and until that deep curse be removed from the nations of the Continent where the Roman Catholic religion prevails, there seems not to be a gleam of hope of their obtaining that degree of domestic virtue, without which no genuine political freedom can be hoped for. So long as there exists a numerous, widely-spread, and educated class of men, in close alliance with the state, but whose interests are entirely separate from those of the rest of the country, and whose manners are necessarily, and by universal usage, understood to be profligate, it is in vain to expect that domestic morals will be pure. Were it possible, indeed, to detach this privileged class from the rest of the community, there might be a hope; but when, through the medium of public preaching, and, above all, of oral confession, and the innumerable other methods by which the priests obtain free admissions every where in those countries, they succeed in establishing their influence, there is little or no hope left.

It is needless, and would only be painful and disgusting, to go into any details. But this may be said, that the wide-spread looseness of domestic manners in Italy, Austria, and other countries where the same system prevails, not only has its origin in the undue influence and profligate habits of the priests, but owes its continuance to their instrumentality. This depravity pervades all classes, and to such an extent, that shame is out of the question; and the whispers of conscience being, especially with such machinery, the easiest thing possible to set at rest, vice has it all its own way.

In hearty co-operation with the priests comes a huge army of a quarter of a million of military men, drawn away from their homes, and virtually, in like manner,

condemned to celibacy; but who are, if possible, even less scrupulous than the priests in their morals, and less restrained in their wish to avenge insulted nature by breaches of the law in question.

This army, as I may have occasion to describe more in detail at another time, is employed in peace chiefly in the collection of the revenue, or, what is the same thing, to punish those who are tardy in their payments. The soldiers are quartered in vast numbers on the inhabitants of the villages all over the country, and thus they become domesticated in the families of the peasantry. All this has the double effect of further corrupting the people, and of showing them how utterly hopeless resistance must be. The discipline of the troops is very strict. The corporal punishments are greatly more prompt and severe than in any other army, and, by one means or another, the most implicit obedience is secured.

Finally, I need scarcely mention that the press, if not totally extinguished, is allowed to burn with so feeble a flame that it lights to no good. And all foreign literature of a generous stamp being, as I have already mentioned, jealously excluded, there is exceedingly small chance left for instruction; there is little or no bounty on knowledge; and as for talents, when they do appear, they are sure to be enlisted on the side of Government. Very few foreigners come into the country at all, and not a man more than the Government can prevent. These are chiefly of the upper classes, who have the discretion to be silent when they know that every word they speak, and every letter they send or receive, is liable to be made known to the authorities. On the other hand, as very few persons of high rank, and scarcely any of the middle or lower ranks, ever go abroad, there seems hardly a possibility of much useful information finding its way into that huge state prison called Austria.

Before leaving this topic, I may be allowed to advert to one striking effect of a considerable length of residence abroad, which is to soften the asperity of political feeling as regards party spirit in our own country. The whole frame-work of society, political and moral, on the continent, is so different—indeed so diametrically opposed in

most things to what we have in England, and is often so degrading, and, I may well add, disgusting to us—that we come in time, and at a distance, to look upon the differences amongst our own politicians as comparatively trifling shades of the same thing, which, when we consider the gulf lying between England and the Continent, are really not worthy of being named. We have a Protestant church and we have genuine liberty—two blessings which, I affirm, no one can value to their full extent till they visit Italy and Austria, and see the horrible vices engendered and fostered by Catholicism—the misery and meanness promoted by the despotic espionage—and, finally, not only the extinction of freedom, but apparently the suppression of almost all wish to be free in those degraded countries.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE IMPERIAL TOBACCONIST.

"Now," said the Countess, triumphantly, "now that we have Schloss Hainfeld all to ourselves, I trust I shall hear no more of preparations and packings up, but that you will, like good people, decide upon staying the winter with me. At all events, that you will stay during the severity of the season, and help me to get through this trying period, always doubly dreary to me. God knows if ever I shall see another spring, and, if it be not impious to say so, I hope I never may. My wish," continued the forlorn invalid, "would be, to drop off while you are here to attend me, instead of being left to die alone—helpless myself—and unprotected by others. Oh, do stay by me, and I may safely promise not to keep you long! Your children are as dear to me almost as to yourselves—their companionship, and especially that of the infant, gives me a fresher interest in life than I ever dreamed of feeling again. But the link will soon snap. I cannot go

on long in this way. All my maladies are on the increase, while my physical strength is gradually yielding to the pressure of disease. Had you not come to me so providentially, I should have been dead by this time; and I should have died wretched and alone, with no hand to close my eyes or smooth my pillow. Heaven has sent you, I feel well assured, to perform these last offices. Do not—oh, do not seek to counteract its dispensations!"

These appeals were hard to resist; and, in fact, we began to feel it a duty to remain by our poor countrywoman at all events till the opening year gave her fresh strength and spirits, as we were told it always did. As to spirits, however, I may repeat that her's never seemed to flag even at those moments when severe pain deprived her of sleep for many nights together. At any rate, she was always tranquil, and good-humoured, and kind to us, to an extent that no chances or changes of life can ever obliterate from our memory.

Our chief happiness, as I have already mentioned, lay at home, as we now called the castle, but we enjoyed ourselves all the more, I do not doubt, from the occasional visits which the Countess's recommendations, more than our own wishes, induced us to pay to her neighbours. Early in December, as the winter was still mild and open, we drove for the second time across the hills north of us. A month before we had made a similar expedition; on that occasion the day was beautiful, and the scenery being of a bolder character than any we had yet seen in Styria, though most of the trees were stripped of their leaves, the country looked still very warmly clad. Part of this effect, no doubt, was due to the large tracks of fir-trees, as well as larch and spruce, maintained almost entirely for fuel, and likewise to the frequent broad and well-watered patches of meadow land spread out like carpets on all the level parts of the landscape. The valley in which Schloss Hainfeld stands, is called the Raab Thal, from the small river of that name which flows through it. To the agency of this stream, exercised during the lapse of ages, is to be referred the broad belt of flat alluvial soil which marks its course, and which is so uncommonly fertile that the wealthy millers on the banks of the stream, and who are most

of them landed proprietors, are called the Fursten, or princes of the valley. Another similar valley lies some leagues to the northward, being divided from the Raab Thal by a ridge of mountains, or rather hills, of the most irregular and even fantastic shape, and so strangely tossed about by the hand of nature, that the hand of man finds it very difficult to make any tolerably passable communication between the two valleys. As long as your carriage is on the bottom on either side of the ridge, it bowls along as if you were driving on a billiard-table, and you exclaim, "What delightful roads!" but the moment you take to the right or left, you would fancy you were driving over the streets of Paris when broken up by the "Patriots of July." In such a fine day as we had for our first expedition in November, we scarcely noticed such things, and were tempted to walk a great part of the way over the hills. But a month later, when the weather admitted not of walking, it was scarcely possible to recognize the same scenery, through the rain and mud, boxed up in what is sadly misnamed a close carriage, letting in the wet and wind at twenty paces.

Although we were much delayed, we had plenty of time to visit one of the four great Tobacco "Fabriques," as they are called, at which all the tobacco used in Austria is prepared. It all comes originally from Hungary, and is strictly monopolized by the government. There is one of these fabriques in Poland, one in Bohemia, another in Moravia, and, lastly, this one in Styria. Tobacco is not allowed to be cultivated in any part of the Austrian dominions except Hungary, from whence it is all transported to these great establishments. The usual office of a manufactory is to improve the raw material which nature produces—that is to say, either to separate them from what is useless, or to combine them, or to twist them up into a manageable shape. But the express business of the Austrian tobacco fabriques is to deteriorate the material, and to prepare it for the market in a less valuable shape than belongs to it when it comes from the field, but in a shape in which it is supposed to yield most revenue to the government. It appears there are three distinct qualities or sorts of tobacco—very good, moderately good,

and bad. Now the business of the fabriques is to mix these three in such proportions that, when the tobacco comes into the market, it shall be just good enough to induce people to buy it, but that it shall contain no more of the first sort than can possibly be helped. As the government are the only tobacconists in Austria, it must require great nicety in these mixtures, and in the regulation of the prices, to insure the maximum of profit; for as there is no competition, there can be no just estimate formed on these subjects, and all must be guess work. That the mixture is too base, and that the price is too high, seems to be evidenced by the prodigious extent of smuggling carried on along the whole line of the Hungarian frontier, and the huge army of custom-house officers, assisted by the military, which it is necessary to keep permanently on foot.

The more generally any article is used, especially if it be an article of necessity, such as tobacco in Germany, the better suited perhaps it is for taxation, and thus tobacco may be fairly considered a most fit object on which to levy duties. But it may well be questioned whether the mode of levying it be not highly oppressive, and whether the immense augmentation of price, in consequence of the monopoly and the tax, be not more than a counterbalancing evil. In England tobacco is not allowed to be cultivated, but the principle of this restriction is not one of monopoly. It is adopted because there can be no means devised by which the home growth could be distinguished from that raised abroad; and as it has been proved it is only that which is imported which can be subjected to a duty, home cultivation would prove fatal to the immense revenue (upwards of three millions sterling) derived from this source. But as much or as little as our free competitors choose, or the country requires, may be introduced. Thus with us the price of the article is augmented by no more than the amount of the tax, which to be sure is very heavy, being ten or twelve times the original cost of the article! But in England, every man who can pay for it may purchase any sort of tobacco he pleases. Not so in Austria, and thus the hardship is more than doubled, for only that which is mixed up at the fabriques is allowed to

be sold. So the whole nation is condemned to use a high priced bad article, instead of a good one at a reasonable cost. The necessities of the state may require the duty to be levied, but it seems hard to insist upon the people smoking bad tobacco when they might grow better.

The Austrian government being thus not only the exclusive deteriorators of tobacco, but the exclusive venders of the article, regulate the price at their pleasure, both in making their purchases and in making their sales; and thus a large, but totally unknown amount of revenue is collected—I mean unknown to all but the highest authorities—for there is no budget in Austria!

This grievance is deeply felt, and bitterly and universally complained of, never loudly of course—but not the less deeply on that account. The apologists of the system—and it is right to listen to what can be said on the occasion—say that the government cannot possibly go on without this source of revenue, and that, after many trials, they have found that any relaxation of the strictest monopoly guarded by the operations of the fabriques, led at once to so serious a diminution of the income of the state, that the old plan was of necessity resumed. Unfortunately, no other method of raising the same amount of revenue, say the apologists, has yet been suggested, or is ever hoped for.

In the mean time, the expense of guarding the frontier is enormous; but as I have no official data to guide me, I am afraid to mention the numbers I have heard stated of the custom-house officers and regular troops who are permanently stationed along the confines of Hungary.

The expense, too, of maintaining the numerous smugglers who are taken with tobacco in their possession, is very great. In every castle, or country-house along the frontiers, there is an express donjon-keep, or prison, for the detention of these poor wretches, who are rather heavily ironed, but who may be employed in field or house-work by the proprietor of the castle, at his own risk; that is to say, if they escape, he has to pay the fine which the government impose, and for the nonpayment of which the smugglers are detained. The amount of the fine is regulated in this way—when a person is caught intro-

ducing tobacco, the quantity detected is weighed, and he is fined a florin for every two German ounces, or about one shilling an ounce; and in default of payment, he is confined as many days as there have been found ounces of tobacco in his possession. I was told that this pecuniary commutation is very seldom paid, and thus the offenders are generally kept in confinement during their whole period, at the rate of about a month for every pound of tobacco. The government makes the proprietor of the castle an allowance for the maintenance of each smuggler, so that the cost of the whole becomes very considerable. As this allowance, however, is inadequate, the oppression is severely felt by the frontier proprietors.

The prison of Hainfeld Castle was any thing but what we call a dungeon, and figure to ourselves dark and damp. The kind-hearted Countess kept the prisoners assigned to her charge in a well-barred, but well-aired and well-warmed apartment, on the ground-floor of the castle, but not under the ground.

One day I had the curiosity to go into this prison, and was much surprised at seeing there a little boy between seven and eight years old, and actually much more heavily ironed than the men were! On inquiry, I learned that he was the son of very indigent parents, who, not being able to maintain him themselves, had hired or lent him to a neighbouring farmer in somewhat better circumstances. This person unfortunately placed in the boy's charge a little child only three months old, and not only permitted him to carry it out of doors, but to wander with it out of sight. The infant, it appears, one day took a fit of crying which the boy could not suppress, and being teased with the noise, or becoming impatient at its refusal to be quiet, he deliberately choked it—literally pressed his hands upon the wretched infant's neck till it was throttled! It would seem that he was aware he had done something wrong, for he carried the child to the river, "and then," as he said in his examination, "he laid it gently in the water." He was found sitting on the bank, unconsciously playing with the wild flowers, with the dead body of the infant lying close by him, under the surface of the stream!

I talked to the boy, and found that he was not a fool,

but so entirely uneducated as to be apparently ignorant of the most obvious distinctions between right and wrong. In short, he had been so totally neglected by his parents, that he differed in few respects from a beast of the field. His head was remarkably large: and if I had been enough of a phrenologist to know how to look for the organ of destructiveness, I should of course have found it very largely developed.

The great puzzle with the local authorities was to say what ought to be done with this young culprit. To hang him would have been too great an outrage on public feeling, and without any utility, as respects example, the great end of punishments; for few children are likely to be tempted to murder one another. To let the little wretch go without chastisement, however, might have been indiscreet; and to confine him for life would have been cruel. Perhaps the best plan would have been to have removed him to a distant part of the empire, and set him down without any one knowing what his crime had been. In that case he might have had a chance of growing up a good member of society.

But the magistrates judged otherwise, and decided upon having him soundly whipped in the prison, three times, at intervals of a fortnight, and then sent home again. Perhaps they did right; but I am inclined to think that the suggestion of our Scotch nursery-maid would have been still more just, as well as more salutary. She proposed to whip, not the child, but the parents, to whose neglect the crime was so clearly traceable!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GERMAN BED.

On returning, about two o'clock, from our visit to the great Tobacco Fabrique, with our eyes, noses and mouths filled with snuff, we found a handsome, but unostentatious

dinner prepared for us; and we passed a most agreeable evening in the society of our kind and accomplished friends, who had asked one or two very pleasant people to meet us. A dinner at two o'clock, even in winter and in good company, makes the evening rather long; and although our hosts laboured most industriously to make us comfortable, and brought every thing to second that object which money could purchase or good-will suggest, the result was any thing but successful. We secretly resolved, therefore, to make this excursion the last for the season. It may, indeed, be pleasant enough to visit such intelligent and hospitable people in fine warm weather; but it becomes a different affair entirely when such a formidable element as cold enters into the calculation, especially in houses so ill adapted as those we saw in Styria to keep out this surly enemy.

Our good friends near the Tobacco Fabrique had spared no expense to make their house elegant. Unfortunately, however, the Germans, like the rest of the continentals, really do not know what comfort means—at least in our sense of the word—and, accordingly they have no word for it in their wonderfully copious language. For example—in this house to which I am describing our visit—there is not a single carpet. The floors of the principal rooms are as beautifully inlaid and polished as a lady's work table,—this may be in good taste, but what is the result of the elegant expense? The cold to the feet is excessive, while the cost of such floors would have covered them with comfortable carpets three times over. Again, there is not one open fire-place in the house, except that in the kitchen; but instead of cheerful grates, as in England, or fire-places, with blazing logs of wood in them, as in Switzerland and France, they have only their wretched, lumbering, ugly stoves, which heat the rooms, to be sure, but in such a close, stuffy, breathless style, that, to our sense at least, comfort is out of the question.

Moreover, whenever in one of these houses the door is opened, the company may be said to be in the open air, for every apartment looks into the unprotected corridor. In summer this matters not, or matters little; but in winter, however close the doors be fitted, or however thick

the wood, the cold will pierce through. Even were it otherwise, still in passing from room to room, you are necessarily exposed to the wind, and a certain share of the wet which is driven in. For each trajet we made we were exposed to as many changes of air. We dined in one room—removed to the pianoforte and music in another—drank tea in a third—besides having to pass from our room after dressing for dinner, and returning to it again at night; and at each of these changes of location, as they say in America, we had truly to make a journey "out of doors." It is, indeed, the most preposterous thing imaginable to build houses, in one of the coldest parts of Germany, on the principle not of an Italian house generally, but of an Italian summer villa!

In other parts of the world, when the cold becomes excessive, and the body cannot be kept warm by such fires as are to be found in bad inns, there remains always the resource of bed and blankets. At least I knew a family, who, in travelling from Paris to London, in the bitter winter of 1829-30, were detained at Calais for the greater part of a day, and not being able by any quantity of firewood to keep the circulation sufficiently active, magnanimously went to bed after breakfast, and lay there till the steam-boat was ready to start!

This, unfortunately, you cannot do in Germany; in the whole range of which, so far as I have seen, and I have travelled over a great part of it, there is not one tolerable bed to be seen; or if there be, it is in such a place as Hainfeld, where the proprietor is either a foreigner, or one who has travelled into countries where the comforts of the bed-room are considered as essential as the elegancies of the drawing-room.

The Germans are a cleanly, sober, civil, hospitable, honest set of people, but they have no idea whatever of how the night ought to be passed. Provided they get through the day with good faith to their neighbours, honour to their king, and devotion to their pipes and priests, they seem to think that the other half of the twenty-four hours may be got over as if it formed an immaterial portion of their time. At all events, I have seldom seen a German bed in which an English gentleman

would not feel half ashamed to put one of his tired pointers after a day's shooting. I do not dwell on the minor discomfort of having no bed-posts or curtains—that one is accustomed to elsewhere abroad. What I complain of is their being so insufferably small in every one of their dimensions. If you are teased with your feet chafing against the boards at the lower end, and you urge yourself upwards, you inevitably knock your head against the top; and if, in despair for want of room lengthwise, you coil yourself up, and thus, as military men say, widen the base of your operations, your knees overhang one side, and some counterpoising point must protrude beyond the opposite margin.

So much for the latitude and longitude of your night's lodgings.

Under you is a waving sea of wretchedly-stuffed mattrasses, or an ill prepared sack of straw or Indian corn leaves, either of which is a luxury compared to that horror of horrors, a feather-bed—which, in nine cases out of ten, you are forced to lie (not to sleep) upon—and, what is unspeakably worse, instead of a good honest blanket or two over you, there is another of these abominable feather-beds. Between these two hateful affairs, there are inserted two damp cloths called sheets, but which might with more propriety, so far as size is concerned, be named pocket-handkerchiefs. To complete the furniture of the bed, there is laid over it, in the daytime, a counterpane of muslin, with a showy fringe, and sometimes worked with flowers—a gaudy covering to the misery which lies buried beneath, "like roses o'er a sepulchre."

I would ask any single gentleman or lady, or lady and gentleman combined in wedlock, how the livelong night —as it may well be called, when passed in a German bed in a German winter—can possibly be arranged with comfort on such terms? "The thing is *un*possible," as the celebrated Hoby said to a customer who required a pair of handsome and comfortable boots for a pair of legs twisted like the ß (sz) of the German alphabet. In like manner, I avow it to be *un*possible to sleep comfortably in any German bed; and it might almost seem as if there were some moral, physical, or political law against con-

structing beds in that country more than three-quarters of an ell in width.

Be these speculations as they may, they contribute nothing to help one to get through the night in Germany; and I took the liberty, when travelling, or when visiting any of the Countess's friends near Hainfeld, to bring my nautical resources into play on this important occasion; and I am sure the German chambermaids must have been greatly edified, as I could see they were greatly astonished, by my devices. My first operation was to wheel, or—as castors are unknown in those remote regions of the globe—to drag two of the things called beds together, and having placed them side by side, and thus doubled the width of the platform, I set my people to sew the sheets together, so as to make one pair out of the two. The ponderous covering of a feather-bed, however, admitted of no substitute. When on, we were too warm; when off, too cold. Thus we were obliged to pass the night in a sort of perpetual ague—a shivering and a hot fit by turns—as the feather-bed was pulled on, or kicked off. On some occasions, indeed, by dint of much asking, we contrived to get, not blankets, because they are totally unknown, but heavy cotton-coverlids, which, in like manner, we sewed together; and thus, at last, after the expenditure of a considerable portion of time and patience, and no small labour, a tolerably comfortable, or, at all events, a less wretchedly uncomfortable bed was rigged out.

As every traveller ought, of course, to have the moral improvement of his fellow-creatures at heart, I made it a rule never to undo these valuable stitches and other nocturnal arrangements on quitting any house; but left the whole apparatus as a model for imitation throughout the German empire. I knew a gentleman who, in travelling through Spain, quietly deposited a Bible in every posada, or public house, in which he passed the night. The Inquisition, however, had very nearly laid him by the heels for his heretical attempts to reform the religious principles of the Spaniards; and I was occasionally not without some apprehension that my attempts to improve the "Domestic manners of the Germans" might be taken

notice of by the Censura or the Police, and the extravagant indelicacy implied in the advocacy of a double bed, be publicly reprobated by my expulsion from the country.

CHAPTER XV.

SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE.

In the Borghese Palace at Rome, there is a picture, I think by Titian, which passes under the above name; but no one appears to be able to decide which of the figures was intended to represent Sacred, and which Profane, love. Perhaps the artist was thinking of neither when he painted the picture; and merely desired to represent two beautiful figures, one of whom is overloaded with the ornaments of dress, the other unencumbered with any drapery. Be this as it may, there certainly is an ambiguity about the design of the picture, which in some degree diminishes its interest.

There will not, however, be any difficulty in distinguishing between the two sorts of love which are sketched in the following true stories, of which both the scenes are laid in Germany; one occurred in Lower Styria, and so close to Hainfeld that we had an opportunity of learning the minutest particulars; the other in the north, at Frankfort on the Maine. The Countess, indeed, from whom I had the first story, was well acquainted with some of the parties.

About eight or ten years ago, there lived in Gratz the widow of an officer in the Austrian army, and her daughter. The girl's beauty is described by all who knew her, as of that dazzling and surpassing lustre which engaged the attention of every class of admirers. It united correctness of features with sweetness of expression; and to these were added, a native elegance of manners, and a kindliness of disposition, together with abilities and taste, which, had they been duly cultivated, would have fitted

poor Leonora for the highest stations in any society. Unfortunately, this Leonora's mother was very unlike the pious matron in Bürger's well-known tale, for she taught her child to look any where but to heaven for protection; and, instead of seeking for a suitable alliance for her daughter, the sordid and infamous wretch dreamed only of the gain—the base pecuniary gain, which the girl's beauty might bring to herself.

In this horrid view she neglected her daughter's mind, or rather, she deliberately perverted it; while she spared no pains to bring forward and enhance the charms of her person. Her wicked purpose was but too soon known to the profligate and wealthy of the other sex, amongst whom this poor young woman may be said to have been put up to auction.

The highest bidder was a nobleman of the adjacent province of Hungary, who agreed to buy the girl, as if she had been a slave, for several thousand florins. The wily mother took his bond for the sum, without any specification of the services for which it was given. On a stated day the Baron, who was a married man with a family, came in his own carriage, received his purchase, signed the bond, and drove off towards one of his numerous castles. Before he had gone half a league, however, he was met by a courier bringing letters which required his immediate presence at home; and as he could not well take his companion with him, he drove back to Gratz with his victim, and requested the mother to give her lodging for a few days, till he could settle his affairs; after which he promised to return and take her away permanently.

The story soon got wind, and a wealthy commissary having caught a glimpse of the girl, at once made proposals to the mother, and she, without the least ceremony, and as might have been expected, resold the poor child, who, being still under sixteen, was allowed no voice in the matter.

By and by the first purchaser came back and demanded the completion of his bargain.

"What bargain?" cried the mother, laughing in his face. "It is I who demand the completion of the bar-

gain. Here is your bond for three thousand florins, *for value received*, and pay me you shall, if there be either law or justice in Austria."

The Baron raved and stormed, refusing to pay a kreuzer; while the lady, dead alike to public shame and to private virtue, straightway went to law; and although, of course, a bond expressly for such a horrid purpose would not have held good in the courts, there could be no valid objection made to the instrument as it was drawn up. The Hungarian was accordingly obliged to pay the money, with costs.

Mean while, the commissary, getting tired of his bargain, cast off the poor ruined girl, who dropped, step by step, and with a rapidity proportionate to her still radiant beauty, into the lowest depths of infamy, want, and sorrow!

In this wretched state she was accidentally seen by a young man, son of a wealthy proprietor in a village near Hainfeld. He brought her to the country with him, and she was no sooner relieved from the coarse depravity of her recent town life, than she recovered a sufficient portion of her former animation to engage the attention of one of the officers of a hussar regiment, quartered in the village. This young man, who was the son of an old and highly esteemed officer in the service of the Emperor, at first merely trifled with the girl; but ere long became passionately attached to her, and she to him, with a degree of violence highly characteristic of the national temperament when strongly excited. The result was not less so.

The colonel of the regiment, well knowing the extent to which these things were sometimes carried, wrote to the young man's father, who, in conjunction with the colonel, took every measure that could be thought of to break off so dangerous a connexion; but it proved in vain. It was now resolved, in order to prevent an unsuitable marriage, to detach the young officer on a distant service in Transylvania, and to send the girl, by force, back to her mother's house at Gratz.

As soon as these arrangements became known to the parties, they resolved to elope—he to desert from the

army, she to accompany him. They escaped accordingly, at midnight—two ruined wretches, galloping to destruction and disgrace, whichever way their passions, altogether uncontrolled, might lead them! At daybreak their flight was discovered, and twenty mounted parties being sent off in as many different directions, the fugitives were soon arrested. They had got as far as Radkesburg, a town on the banks of the great river Mur, about four hours' drive south of Hainfeld. But as they stated that they were too much exhausted to go back immediately, the officer in command of the party who had arrested them, made no objections to their remaining at the inn, under a guard. This interval, which the good nature of the officer allowed them to pass together, they employed chiefly in writing letters. Their cheerfulness astonished every one who saw them, especially some officers of a regiment stationed in the town, and whose mess was held at the inn where the lovers were. An invitation to dinner naturally followed, and was accepted, under the sanction of the officer who guarded and accompanied them.

After dinner, some one came running in to say that the ice which had dammed up the Mur had suddenly given way, and that what is called a Debacle, was the consequence. The river, swollen to twice its usual dimensions, was gushing tumultuously through the arches of the bridge, filled to the key-stone with blocks of drift ice.

The officers all ran off to see the sight, and Leonora, having exchanged an intelligent glance with her companion, petitioned hard to be allowed to go too. The guard consented, and away they all went together. The awful scene had attracted half the population of the town. On the highest point of the bridge stood the group of officers, wondering and admiring. Leonora leaned over the parapet and observed the commotion with a steadier eye than any of the party; and then turning to her lover, exclaimed,—

"Now, Wilhelm!"

And, clasped in one another's arms, they flew headlong into the torrent, in which they were instantly swallowed up and lost!

Two letters were found in the girl's handwriting. One of these addressed to the person who had brought her to the country: the other to her mother. In the first, she said,—

"You used to reproach me with having no heart, and of my being incapable of any heroic or noble action. I then believed that you were right in your estimate of my character. I did not believe that I could love any one, still less that any one could love me. Both, however, have come to pass. The close of my brief life will prove whether or not I can act nobly!"

To her mother she had written the following bitter words:—

"Before this reaches your hands, your most wretched daughter will be no more. Her blood be on your head. She possessed qualities which would have done you honour, and made her virtuous and happy, had you duly cherished them, or even allowed them to grow of themselves. Your avarice blasted them all. You taught me to consider vice a duty. You see the result. Your daughter has at last awakened to life and love—only to die in despair!"

The painful impressions which every part of this story is calculated to leave on the mind will be relieved by the following narrative; for the truth of every particular of which I can answer. At first sight, it might seem that no two pictures of national manners, or rather of national sentiment, could be more opposed to each other; and this is certainly true, so far as regards the incidents, but the guiding principle in both is a depth of feeling, and a resolution of purpose essentially German.

Not many years ago a young man, eldest son of a gentleman holding a high situation in one of our colonial possessions, came over to Frankfort, after having studied for some time at Cambridge. His object was partly to read for his examination preparatory to entering the church, and partly to learn the German language. Being a man of studious habits and reserved disposition, he was for some time little seen, and scarcely known or heard of in that bustling city.

It was during this period of comparative seclusion that Bertrand, as the hero of my story my be called, acciden-

tally met with a young German lady, to whom I shall give the name of Berglein, then about seventeen years of age, and very pretty. She was of a good family; but from unfortunate circumstances their means had been reduced, and she, in order to support her widowed mother and herself, had taken the resolution of going on the stage as a singer. The Germans are severe critics in this matter, and she had much to struggle against; but her fine and well-cultivated voice, her beauty, her elegant manners, and her irreproachable conduct, gradually won for her the esteem and the admiration of the public.

Bertrand lost his heart at first sight; but he was a man of too much sense and knowledge of the world to be led away merely by a pretty face and sweet voice; and though he thought he saw under these attractions many other qualities of a higher order, and worthy of a permanent attachment, he concealed all he thought and felt for a considerable time. During this interval he abstained with a very reasonable and cautious but most rare self-denial from manifesting the slightest symptom of his growing passion, being firmly resolved to study the character and disposition of his fair friend before he declared his love, or embarked in such a wild adventure as, he could not conceal from himself, the tide of his passions was rapidly sweeping him into.

At this period of the history accidental circumstances brought him more into company, and people began to wonder where or how so intelligent and agreeable a person had remained so long concealed amongst them. In his turn he was equally pleased to find society amongst his country people, who could not only advance his professed objects, but who, as it happened, could aid his secret hopes and wishes.

It is a safe general rule in the affairs of the heart to hold no communication on the subject except with the person who is most concerned in keeping the secret, if it is to be one, and in whose custody it is safest till the fitting moment of disclosure. Under such peculiar circumstances, however, of doubt and probable difficulty in the conduct of this affair, Bertrand did well to take counsel; and he was not less fortunate in friendship than in love.

At first, his friend, as might be expected, saw the transaction with very different eyes, and even thought the youth a little *non compos* to dream of a serious engagement with a foreign actress. He expostulated with him of course on the precarious nature of such a step, and the hazard in which it placed his future prospects of happiness. Bertrand's natural answer to all this was: "Is there any thing in the birth, character, education, or conduct of this young lady which renders her an unsuitable person for an English clergyman's wife?" His friend's local acquaintance was extensive, and his inquiries, though quiet, were diligent and searching. The result proved every way satisfactory; for those who had known her from her childhood were equally warm in their approval of her education, temper, and principles, with those who had known her more recently, and since she had earned the regard of the public.

Thus fortified in his resolutions, Bertrand allowed matters to run on, for nearly a year of increasing intimacy, when it became necessary that he should return to England. Before leaving Frankfort, however, he made his declaration, and met with a ready and happy return of affection and confidence on the part of the lady. His plan was to pass his examination at Cambridge, and then to come back immediately.

It was a cold and rainy night when he took his departure, and the poor fellow was in wretched spirits. All the folly—so to call it—of his strange adventure stared him in the face: all the chances of fortune; all the opposition he was sure to meet with; all the doubts and fears, in short, of a lover's mind, crowded round him, and formed the companions of his solitary journey. Nor could his cooler friends help thinking, as the carriage drove away, that the whole was a mere romance; and, like an unhappy fairy tale, must prove an unsubstantial, painful dream. A few weeks' residence in England, thought they, will cure the poor youth of this anomalous attachment, and break off a connexion so little conformable to English habits and sober views of prudence, especially in the case of a clergyman.

All these speculations, however, were dissipated by

Bertrand's reappearance at Frankfort one fine day, true to his appointment. Whilst in England, he had been ordained by the Bishop of London; and it was arranged that in three weeks he should proceed to India to officiate as chaplain at the same station with his father. Thus he had but little time to pass with the poor devoted girl, who having given away her whole heart, looked with a sort of despair to being left alone in the wide world. Bertrand, on his side, had no small struggle to make between his inclinations and his sense of duty. But he acted with great firmness and honour; and his merit is the greater from his being what is called his own master. For the rest, he was sufficiently in love to commit almost any rash act, so far as concerned himself; but he justly considered it incumbent upon him to disclose his secret to his father and mother, and in good faith, and by legitimate means, to obtain, if possible, their hearty consent to his marriage. To give him any chance of accomplishing this primary duty, it appeared absolutely necessary that he should join his parents, and make his explanations in person. "If, however," said he, to the despairing girl, "after fulfilling my duty as a good son, and having used my best endeavours to win their approbation of our union, I find that I cannot succeed, I shall still act up to the sacred engagements I have contracted here, and not fail to return to Europe to make you my wife, be the consequences what they may."

The poor young woman considered the voyage to India a journey to the next world, or thereabouts; for her own circumscribed notions of distance reached little farther than to Offenbach, or to Mayence, the Ultima Thule of her travels. She was accordingly well nigh broken hearted at the idea of being separated from her lover by the great ocean; by the globe itself, indeed; and she in all probability thought, in spite of her firm reliance on his honour, that he might find it impossible ever to return to her. Whatever were the fears that flitted through her mind, however, she gave them no expression; still less did she seek to combat his sense of right, or to interfere with what on the contrary she fully agreed with him in considering his duty to his parents.

She, too, had her severe sacrifices to make on the score of duty ; and she made them with a steadiness and vigour of character which, though they distressed him at the moment, could not fail to establish her worth more firmly in his breast.

He felt naturally a strong desire that she should forthwith quit the stage, and employed every argument he could think of to induce her to agree to this. He also placed in her hands a letter of credit to the full amount of her professional salary, in order that, on retiring from the theatre, she might not be deprived of the means of supporting her mother and several younger brothers and sisters. Her delicacy naturally shrunk from receiving any support from him previous to marriage ; and she replied, with an honourable pride, that having gone upon the stage from a conviction that it was right, she would not now shrink from doing her duty, while all the circumstances remained as before, with the exception of her own future prospects, and these were contingent. There could be nothing inconsistent or unsuitable, still less disreputable, she wisely thought, in following industriously that course of life which, experience was just beginning to show her, afforded her the means of supporting her family. To a mind so constituted, and a heart so engaged, the dangers of such a career were nothing at all, however severe the labours might prove, or however humiliating its conditions might sometimes appear to a generous disposition and refined taste, when contrasted with the almost boundless enjoyments of the life which fortune, she fondly whispered, might still have in reserve to reward her perseverance and truth.

In this temper they parted ; and though the smart of such a separation was very bitter, it had not only no remorse and no misgivings to keep the wound open, but was soothed by the cheerful consciousness of rectitude,—a consciousness which, while it always lessens sorrow, generally serves, even in a greater ratio, to brighten hope. On the present occasion there was need of all such support, and the painful interval of more than two years' separation became an ordeal to their true love, which would have scattered a less well-founded passion to the winds and waves. It only deepened and confirmed theirs.

Scarcely was Bertrand gone when all the world began to criticise his conduct in every possible way; and, singularly enough, the very honourable and judicious motive which had prompted him to defer his marriage for the present was tortured into an argument against him in the eyes of the public. It was maintained that his desire to obtain his parents' consent was a mere excuse, and all the worse for taking upon itself the pretext of a duty; that he had all along been insincere; and, in short, that the woman he had trifled with would never see him, or hear of him again. Much of this and many other things came to the poor girl's ears through the industrious kindness of her friends. She could not help being much distressed at what was so freely handed to her from every corner of the town; but she never gave way in the least, and only the more fondly cherished in silent confidence her deep-rooted conviction of her lover's honesty and sincerity throughout, and with every appearance of good reason she reckoned on his constancy, knowing how true she was herself.

In process of time letters arrived, written during the voyage, from Madeira and elsewhere. These quieted the noise for a time; but, by degrees, the first notions gained fresh ground with the charitable multitude. As month after month elapsed, the good people of Frankfort, who are not very skilful in general geography, and may not well understand the nature of an Indian voyage, and the causes of delay in such correspondences, fancied themselves quite secure in their belief that Bertrand was never serious when he made his proposals.

He, however, wrote constantly, and much of all this gossip might no doubt have been put to rest had not a becoming dignity on the lady's part restrained her from making known these communications.

After about a year and a half had passed in this way, a new and very distressing source of uneasiness beset the lady. Her mother's patience, which had been gradually becoming less and less as month after month rolled away, altogether left her; and she began to reproach her daughter day and night with her folly in neglecting the solid advantages of a lucrative profession for the vain chimera of

a happiness which, to all appearance, was never likely to be realized. All this the daughter could only submit to in silent mortification; but when urged to make use of the letter of credit left with her, she declared positively that she never would take any advantage of his generosity until she was his wedded wife.

These expostulations, by being constantly reiterated, produced a certain effect, though not exactly that which was aimed at. It was not unnatural also, that after two-and-twenty months had elapsed, occasional moments of despondency should occur; and all the more naturally, perhaps, as her own affections remained unchanged. In the midst of these harassing troubles, she received the important intelligence that Bertrand's father and mother had at last consented to his marriage, though his letter held out no positive hopes of his obtaining immediate leave to come to Europe.

This communication, and the renewed and ardent assurances of his attachment, enabled her to bear up under the many trials she had yet to go through. Her mother, however, who had lost all confidence, and who took only a business-like and unpoetical view of the matter, never ceased importuning her daughter to quit the narrow field of Frankfort, and seek to better her condition by trying to obtain an engagement on higher terms at some other theatre. It was very difficult for the poor girl to hold out against such arguments, when not only unsupported by friends, but actually persecuted by enemies. In the first place, she was exposed to the constant and unfeeling jeers of the people about her, and, in the next, to the tyranny of a certain powerful personage, who, because she had rejected his repeated advances and bribes with the utmost scorn, chose, in revenge, to impede her professional advancement, and to annoy her in every possible way. The passive resignation with which she endured all this at length gave way, and in a fit of despair she yielded to her mother's representations and entreaties, and threw up her moderate engagement at Frankfort.

In the depth of winter, and after she had been for many weary months without receiving a line from Bertrand, she set out with her mother on a professional tour to Stutgardt,

Munich, and Vienna. In spite of her being extremely low-spirited and disconsolate, and in the worst mood which could be imagined to contribute, night after night, to the amusement of the public, she produced everywhere a great impression. Her unaffected melancholy, her amiable and gentle manners, and her personal attractions, won for her everywhere many friends amongst persons of taste and understanding; while her voice and other accomplishments received the applause of the multitude. But praise fell dead upon her ear, and the success which she met with contributed fully as much to wound her delicacy as to gratify her pride; and though the mother rejoiced at these opening prospects, the girl herself wept in secret bitterness of spirit over her own popularity. In the midst of these applauses, she wrote constantly to her distant lover, and the burthen of every page was, "Come quickly, and fetch me away; I am heartily sick of this wretched kind of life."

Towards the end of spring it was known at Frankfort that she had been engaged, on very advantageous terms, at one of the principal theatres of Vienna; and what astonished and mortified those who were in the secret of her history, it appeared that she had signed a contract for two years. It was the more surprising and provoking that she had been compelled to adopt this course by the importunities of the people about her, as Bertrand had written in the autumn to say, that in the beginning of the year he hoped to obtain leave of absence. As she had not since heard from him, she ought no doubt to have abided by the words of his last letter, and so she promised and resolved to do; but it is one thing to resolve and promise to be prudent and cautious, and another to act in that spirit in the midst of doubts and difficulties, and especially in the face of those considerations which take the name of duties, and are urged with earnestness by those to whom essentially our obedience is due.

However this may be judged of by persons who have been exposed to such domestic influence—to call it by its mildest term—our poor, worn-out heroine at last gave way, and signed the contract which bound her for two

years to a slavery of no small severity, as the issue will show.

Two days after she had taken this incautious step, a letter was received from Bertrand himself, dated London, and addressed to his faithful friend at Frankfort. Of course it enclosed one for the lady he hoped almost immediately to call his wife, and he instructed his friend to put it into her own hands immediately, for he took it for granted, poor fellow! that she was still at Frankfort.

It also appeared, that owing to some misapprehension of the proper forms, he had quitted India without having received the regular official leave, so that, on his presenting himself at the Foreign Office, he was called upon to explain the reason of being absent from his post. This he found no difficulty in doing, so far as was necessary to exculpate himself. Nevertheless, as his being absent was deemed quite irregular, he was peremptorily required to return forthwith in the very vessel which had brought him to Europe.

Now, as this ship was to sail about the end of June, and it was already past the 20th of May, he had no time to lose, even supposing that he had nothing but his marriage to get settled. To render him eligible, however, for the appointment which had been sent out to him, but which had crossed him on his way home, it was necessary that he should be back in England on the 10th of June, to be examined by the Bishop of London previous to his admission to priest's orders. So great was his haste, that he wrote to beg his friend to look out for any English clergyman who might be travelling through Frankfort, and, if possible, induce him to stay there a day or two, that the marriage ceremony might be performed at the British Mission.

On the 27th of May, he arrived at Frankfort, and there learned with unspeakable dismay, that the lady was absent, at a distance, and a bond-servant, as will be seen, to no very lenient task-masters. His disappointment and grief were excessive; but there was no leisure for regrets, and time pressed hard upon him. Nothing, however, could be done till her answer came to his first letters from London on his arrival from India, and he was obliged to

wait, in an agony of suspense, till the 3d of June, before her reply reached him at Frankfort.

Nor did the contents of the despatch serve materially to lessen his distress; on the contrary, they threw a fearful damp over the whole business. In words, breathing the deepest despair, she announced to her half-distracted lover that the manager was inexorable, and would not hear of her leaving Vienna one hour before the expiration of the two years stipulated in the fatal contract. How to act, she said, she knew not; and bitter were the reproaches she heaped on herself for having been weak enough to sign the ill-fated bond, which chained her to as galling a servitude as ever broke the heart of any galley slave.

"For mercy's sake!" she wrote, "do not condemn me, or suppose that in contracting these odious engagements I dreamed of breaking faith with you. My love and faith are the same, and must be so for ever, and I beseech you to come to Vienna without a moment's loss of time, to bring me away, for in truth I am beside myself. I have no one to advise—no one to act for me."

We may conceive his state of mind on finding himself unable to comply with a request so urged. But it was quite impossible for him, without utter ruin to all his prospects, to fail in his appointment in England on the 10th. What was to be done? It struck him and others, that, if an application could be made to the British minister at Vienna, stating all the circumstances, and requesting him to intercede with the Austrian authorities, she might possibly succeed in getting off. So firmly indeed was he persuaded that this plan would prove successful, that, when an obliging and kind official friend undertook to write to Vienna in the terms suggested, he became comparatively tranquil, and started the next day for London. He hoped, he said, to be back at Frankfort by the 18th, after his ordination—by which time he had no doubt the lady would have arrived, and if the marriage could take place on the 19th or 20th of June, there would still be time to reach Portsmouth by the 30th, on which day the Fairy Queen—the romantic and appropriate name of the good ship—was to set sail for India.

The promised letters were written to the authorities at Vienna, but before any answer had been received, Bertrand suddenly reappeared at Frankfort on the 14th, several days sooner than it had been calculated he could by possibility have returned. To his eager and breathless interrogatories, "Where is she?—where can I find her?" only the forlorn answer could be given that nothing was yet known.

Under the influence of the cheerful views of his friends, and their confident hopes of all going right and in good time for his voyage, he became a little more composed, and related to them how it had been possible for him to return to Frankfort so much sooner than he had contemplated.

It appeared that the Bishop of London, seeing him much agitated, had begged to know the cause of his anxiety. Those who have the happiness of being personally acquainted with this no less amiable than distinguished prelate, need not be told with what kindly interest he would listen to such a story. Nor will they be surprised at the prompt and business like goodness of heart which induced him at once to suggest to the young man to defer his ordination until his arrival in India. One of the newly appointed bishops, he said, was to sail in a fortnight, and to him the necessary letters demissory should be given, empowering him to ordain our friend on his arrival. His Lordship may well have conceived that the young man's thoughts and feelings were at this moment rather too deeply fixed on the things of this earth for him to attend adequately to the calm and deliberate considerations connected with the solemn ceremony alluded to. The good Bishop did not say so, however, but having merely expressed the strongest interest in the eventual success of these romantic adventures, he begged the young man instantly to return to Frankfort, because he must insist upon his sailing at the end of the month, as had been ordered by the Foreign Office.

I forgot to mention that Bertrand had lodged a couple of hundred pounds with the captain of the Fairy Queen, as part of the passage money for himself and his wife to India; and he had requested the captain, of whom he had

made a cordial friend on his voyage homewards, to wait for him until the first week of July. To this the other consented; for although it was some days later than he intended to sail, he, in common with every one who knew the circumstances, took a sort of personal interest in our hero's success.

The 1st of July, however, was now fast approaching, and the poor fellow, half dead with anxiety, was obliged to wait at Frankfort till some answer came. He did expect, indeed, that she for whom he watched would arrive in person to set all to rights. The road leading from Vienna was his only haunt; and every carriage that came that way, partook of his scrutiny; but all in vain. Love seemed to be wingless in this case; and as the post in Germany is but a poor representative of Cupid, it was not till the 18th, four weary days after Bertrand's arrival from England, that a letter reached him from Vienna.

The lady of his love, it seemed, was in as bad a predicament as ever was any captive damsel in a romance. Her position, she wrote, was almost hopeless; for the manager was not only inexorable, and deaf to all her prayers and tears, but so apprehensive that she would attempt to cut and run, that he applied to the authorities, and requested them to refuse her a passport, in the event of her applying for one. General orders were accordingly given to this effect; and two police officers being placed night and day at the door of the house in which she and her mother lodged, she was, to all intents and purposes, a prisoner. True to the proverb, however, the pith of the lady's letter lay in the postscript, which set forth, in a few mysterious words, that something was doing at that moment which might possibly end in her release; but what this something was, she purposely avoided explaining, lest her letter might be tampered with.

This communication naturally increased the embarrassments of our hero's desperate condition, and the grand question became, whether he ought himself to start for Vienna, and endeavour to carry off his future wife, knight-errant fashion, *vi et armis*, or wait for two or three days longer, to learn the result of the British minister's interference, which he knew was in progress. It was urged

upon him, and he could not deny the force of the reasoning, that he ought at all events to wait till the 23d, the return of post to the official application; and there was a possibility that the lady might arrive at Frankfort by that time, in which case all minor difficulties would be at an end.

In that event they could be married on the 24th; for a clergyman who happened to be passing, consented to wait a few days, and held himself ready to clench the bolt which was at last to bind these true hearts together. If this could be effected, they might still reach London by the 29th or 30th, and thus save their passage, by arriving at Portsmouth before the first of July.

On the other hand it was pointed out to him, that even setting aside the possibility, or rather very great probability of his passing the lady on the road (in which case his journey to Vienna would be worse than useless,) he could not be back at Frankfort before the end of the month, and thus inevitably would be too late for the impatient Fairy Queen.

The disadvantages attendant upon that contingency were not a few. In the first place, he would lose his deposited passage money; in the second, which was worse, he would incur the displeasure of the Foreign Office; and in the third—besides in some degree breaking faith with the generous Bishop of London—he would certainly fail to meet the Bishop of Madras, as had been arranged, and thus his ordination could not take place. These formidable considerations, placed in their naked truth before him, like the technical explanations of a surgeon on the necessity of an amputation, opened the poor patient's eyes to the precarious nature of his position, and with what fortitude he could muster, he agreed to wait at Frankfort till the 23d of the month.

But when the 23d arrived there arrived no lady; and what was totally inexplicable, no letter! Our hero, now grown quite desperate, broke away from all his reasonable friends, hired a carriage, and on that very evening started post for Vienna, with the pleasant prospect of being accompanied in his rattling vehicle by no better companions than his own harassing thoughts, for four days and four

nights, before there was a possibility of his anxiety being relieved.

Fortunately he had sufficient rationality left before he started, to write a few lines to the captain of the ship, to state in what a wretched predicament he was placed, and to entreat him if he possibly could, to wait a little longer. "If you cannot," added he, "I must of course forfeit my passage money, put my character in hazard, at all events, for prudence and propriety; and perhaps sacrifice all my prospects in life."

Nothing was heard either of the lady or of the gentleman for eight days; that is to say, until the first of July, the very day on which, had things gone right, they ought to have been bounding over the waves on board the good ship Fairy Queen.

In the evening of that eventful day, the lady and her mother arrived at Frankfort in good health, but almost expiring with fatigue. She had seen nothing, and heard nothing of her lover, and immeasurably was her disappointment not to find him at Frankfort.

It appeared that the ladies, having grown desperate at the barbarous and unjustifiable treatment of the manager of the theatre, to whom an ample compensation had been offered, resolved to have recourse to stratagem; and as there is a perseverance in the German character which, when stimulated by a generous motive, overcomes every obstacle not absolutely insuperable, these two unassisted females managed to elude even the proverbial vigilance of the Austrian police, though fully on the alert!

Having observed that a visitor of their landlord's was somewhat moved by witnessing their distress, they prevailed upon him to assist them in hiring a large cart, drawn by four oxen, which they ordered to be ready for them on the high-road at nine o'clock in the evening of the 24th—just one day after poor Bertrand was posting along to their rescue in the opposite direction. This cart belonged to a set of smugglers, who for a round sum of money, consented to place it at the disposal of the ladies, or to convey them in it to the frontiers of Bavaria.

A little before nine o'clock, accordingly, the ladies stepped out as if to take a walk in the Prater, and as they

carried nothing with them but their purses and parasols, no suspicion was excited, and they succeeded in mounting the wagon unobserved. Once there, they were speedily concealed under some straw which had been provided for the occasion; and as a mattrass was placed at the bottom, and an awning drawn overhead, they were not very uncomfortably circumstanced. As the quickest posting in Germany tries the patience of the most easy going travellers, we may figure to ourselves the agony of a young lady *flying* to join her lover in a broad-wheeled wagon, drawn by four oxen, and moving at a foot's pace; and their misery must have been not a little augmented by knowing how readily they might have been overtaken should the secret of their mode of escape have leaked out.

Nothing occurred, however, to disturb them till they came within a few hundred yards of the Bavarian frontier, when, as they had no passports, they were filled with fears of being stopped by the gens d'armes. It then occurred to them that the best way to avoid exciting suspicion, as the wagon was sure to be searched, was to get out and walk at such a distance before as to imply no connexion between it and them. In this way, with their open prayer books in their hands, as though on a pilgrimage, they passed the dreaded frontier—not, indeed, unobserved, but unobstructed, for every one made way for the Holy Sisters, and all the men took off their hats out of respect, and little dreaming to whom they were paying such honours.

By these devices and various other contrivances, and after travelling by the most heterogeneous conveyances, and often on foot, for leagues together, they reached Frankfort on the eighth day from the time of their escape from Vienna.

Strange to say, Bertrand arrived also at Frankfort, on his return, on the very same evening, an hour before the ladies, after having travelled post eight days and eight nights, during which interval he had made just twice the journey they had gone, and it is certain he must once have met them, and once overtaken them.

His surprise on reaching Vienna to find the birds flown was only equalled by his delight to know that they had

escaped, and that they could not be traced. He knew well enough the direction of their flight, and in that direction he at once turned his horses' heads,—waiting no longer in the capital than to strike a bargain with a set of woodcutters, to give the iron-hearted manager of the theatre a sound cudgelling.

The sequel of the story may be easily imagined. The course of true love had been well Macadamized by all this hammering, and ran smooth at last. A couple of days for rest were deemed no more than enough, as all hopes of the ship having waited for them were gone. Unfortunately, too, the clergyman who was to have married them had been obliged to leave Frankfort; so they were compelled to proceed to the Hague, where matrimony crowned with happiness the hero and heroine of so much truth, constancy, and perseverance.

The mother, handsomely and permanently provided for by her son-in-law, returned to her own country, while the young couple proceeded at once to London. There they learned, to their great joy, that the generous captain of the Fairy Queen had consented to defer his departure from day to day, in hopes of his young friend being able to make out his marriage. By dint of great exertion, they arranged all their business in one day, reached Portsmouth in the course of the night, in good time to embark; and set sail, with a fair wind and joyous hearts, for the other side of the world.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FESTIVITIES OF HAINFELD.

WEEK rolled away after week at Hainfeld, and the longer we staid and the more we saw of the charming old Countess the less inclined we felt to brave the cold and discomfort of a winter's journey. And though the season proved uncommonly mild, we never felt sure how soon the frost and snow might set in and upset all our calcula-

tions. The Countess, who was always on the watch, took advantage of these moments of doubt in our minds, and never ceased urging us to remain by her. As heretofore, also, she laboured incessantly to amuse us, either by getting pleasant people to come to the house, or sending us to visit such of her neighbours as she thought would interest us. But after all, her own conversation furnished our highest enjoyment, and no portion of every happy day was so delightful to us all as that in which we took our regular turns by her bedside.

When the day came which we had last fixed for starting,—I think it was the 1st of December,—no one seemed inclined to take any notice of it, and of course least of all the Countess. And towards the close of the year we had, by a sort of mutual agreement, ceased to speak on the subject of our departure, and for the time we felt as if we had at last found a home after our many wanderings.

The closing day of the year has extra claims upon my attention, as it is my birthday ; and I could say at Hainfeld, as I say now, that I do not wish to be one year or one day younger. I suppose, indeed, that the precise period at which people begin to regret being so old, varies with different individuals. I presume that regrets on the score of age will be most acute with those who, on looking back, see many opportunities wasted which they might have enjoyed in their season, but of which they can no longer taste when the years are gone in which alone, by the construction of our nature, these could have been relished.

I am acquainted with many persons who try to anticipate these matters, and begin too soon with every thing; but I know still more who are constantly a stage too late, who let the seasons of happiness slip past in discontent, and never learn how to profit by the present hour.

I cannot say I have been troubled in this way; for I have enjoyed, to the full, each successive period of my life, as it has rolled over me; and, just as I began to feel that I had had nearly enough of any one period, new circumstances, more or less fortunate and agreeable, began to start up, and to give me fresher, and, generally speaking, more lively interest in the coming period than in that

which had just elapsed. As a middy, I was happy—as a lieutenant, happier—as a captain, happiest! I remember thinking that the period from 1815 to 1823, during which I commanded different ships of war, could not by any possibility be exceeded in enjoyment; and yet I have found the dozen years which succeeded greatly happier, though in a very different way. It is upon this that the whole matter turns. Different seasons of life, like different seasons of the year, require different dresses; and if these be misplaced, there is no comfort.

Were I asked to review my happy life, and to say what stage of it I enjoyed most, I think I should pitch upon that during which I passed my days in the scientific, literary, and political society of London, and my nights in dancing and flirting till sunrise, in the delicious paradise of Almacks, or the still more bewitching ball-rooms of Edinburgh! Perhaps next best was the quiet half-year spent in the Schloss Hainfeld.

What the future is to produce is a secret in the keeping of that close old fellow, Time; but I await the decision with cheerfulness and humble confidence, sure that whatever is sent will be for the best, be it what it may.

The good old Countess, who, as I have mentioned, lay in bed meditating how she could entertain us, contrived on the occasion of my birthday to get up a little ceremony after the fashion of Styria, to do me honour, as she was good enough to say. I felt much honoured accordingly; the children were enchanted, and all the household were made very happy in a rustic way; while the Countess, who superintended the whole in its minutest details, and who, in spite of her griefs, was always cheerful, and often quite merry, enjoyed the festivities, so far as she could see them or hear of them, with all the ardour of a young person.

On the 31st of December, accordingly, as soon as dinner was over, the master of the revels and chief manager, Joseph, announced to us that the ceremony was now to commence; and we were ushered in all form, through the billiard-room, and the little parlour beyond it, into the library. In the middle was placed a semicircular range of chairs, the centre one of which was a huge, old,

high-backed, gilt piece of furniture, on which I was desired to seat myself. The older members of my family took post on the right, the younger on the left, except the youngest of all, aged a year and a half, who sat on my knee; such being considered the place and position in which the young Graf, as they called him, was least likely to make an uproar.

In front, and a little on one side, were planted two rows of grim looking peasants, each six in number, and facing one another, so as to form an avenue for the procession, which soon entered. Those on the right hand, the hereditary gamekeepers of the estate, carried ancient and curious fowling-pieces on their right shoulders. The party facing them, who bore the title of foresters, grasped the appropriate wood-axe in their hands; and, moreover, each of the twelve bore a blazing torch, which, being the only lights in the room, shed a flaring but imperfect lustre, over the dark oak pannels and long lines of venerable volumes of the old castle library.

Presently a flourish of trumpets was heard from the remote apartments of the suite, which was soon followed by the measured tread of fifty rough-shod feet, trampling like so many horses' hoofs over the bare wooden floors, whose naked beauties had never been hid by a carpet since the mansion was founded by the great-great-grandfather of the last of the Purgstalls.

At the head of the procession came the Verwalter, or, as we should call him in England, the bailiff, or landsteward. In his hand he carried a roll of papers, as an emblem of his office. He was followed by all the different members of the household and of the home-farm, each one bearing, in like manner, some symbol of his specific employment.

On reaching the table which stood before us, the Verwalter addressed me in the following speech, which I give, together with my answer, first in the original German, for the advantage of the learned who are curious in such matters, and then in the English translation, for the benefit of the unlearned few who may happen to read these pages. The Verwalter spoke his speech boldly out; but I took the precaution of reading mine "en Prince;" and I must

not conceal the fact of its having been, like other great men's speeches, written for me by my ministers. Unlike kings, however, in such cases, I got full credit with my audience not only for the thoughts—which really were mine—but for the borrowed language in which they were clothed.

The Verwalter's oration was as follows:—

"Zur Feier des Tages, an welchem ein so weltberühmter Mann geboren ward, werden wir von der hohen Frau Eigenthümerinn dieses Schlosses gesendet, auch von unserer Seite das Unserige beizutragen.

"Erläuben Sie uns daher, Ihnen bei dieser festlichen Gelegenheit in ihrem Namen, und im Namen der ganzen Gegend unsere Huldigung und unsere besten Wünsche darzubringen; und wenn einst Ihr Beruf Sie wieder in weit entfernte Länder dahin führt, so nehmen Sie die Versicherung mit, dass Sie unser Andenken an Ihre Gegenwart und unsere Verehrung überall hinbegleiten wird."

To which I was graciousiy pleased to answer in the following words:—

"Herr Verwalter!

"Ich bin höchst erfreut über die gütigen Wünsche meiner ausgezeichneten Freundin, der Gräfinn von Purgstall, vorzüglich, da sie mir von einem so wissenschaftlichen Mann dargebracht werden.

"Obschon die verehrte Frau Gräfinn leider durch Krankheit verhindert wird, dieses Fest durch ihre Gegenwart zu verherrlichen, so ist der Eifer und die Aufmerksamkeit ihrer Untergebenen für uns so gross, dass man uns nicht besser behandeln könnte, wären wir selbst die Herren dieses Schlosses.

"Die Erinnerung an unsern Aufenthalt in Hainfeld wird uns überall hinbegleiten, und mit Dankbarkeit erfüllen.

"Ich bitte Sie, diese meine Gesinnungen dem ganzen Hausgesinde mitzutheilen."

These speeches, done into English, are as follows:—The Verwalter said to me,

"The honoured mistress of this castle has commissioned us to celebrate the anniversary of the day on which a man so renowned all over the world was born. We are

assembled here in person to contribute as far as we can to fulfil this object.

"Allow us, upon this festal occasion, in the name of our mistress, and in that of the whole neighbourhood, to offer you our homage, our best wishes, and our assurances that, when you shall again be called to distant lands, you will bear with you every where our remembrance of your presence amongst us, and our grateful sense of the honour you have done us."

To which I replied:—

"Mr. Bailiff!

"I am highly gratified by the good wishes of my much honoured friend the Countess Purgstall, more particularly as they are communicated to me by so learned a personage.

"Although, alas! our most estimable Countess is prevented by illness from honouring this festival by her presence, so great have been the zeal and the attentions of all her people to us, that, had we been masters of the castle, we could not have been treated with more distinction.

"Wherever we may go we shall ever retain the most pleasing recollection of our visit to Hainfeld; and I beg, Sir, you will make our most grateful acknowledgments known to the whole household."

As soon as these speeches were over, all the Countess's establishment passed round the library in pairs in review before us. Each couple carried something to indicate the department to which they belonged. The washerwomen carried a tub a-piece as white snow—the woodmen a shining hatchet—the gardeners bore a handsome vase in which a laurel grew—this they placed on the table before me. The cooks in like manner carried a huge cake, and the Verwalterin, or Madame Bailiff, presented my little son with a bunch of grapes almost as big as himself. The maids twirled their brooms—the coachmen flourished their whips—and the swarthy blacksmiths of the castle handled their sledge-hammers as if they had been models in paper—while the masons brought up the rear, trowels in hand.

The following is a list of the persons forming the Countess's establishment:—

PERSONEN

WELCHE DEN EINZUG AM 31 DECEMBER 1834 IN HAINFELD BILDETEN.

Alois Perger, Verwalter. (Landsteward.)
Carl Steinhauser, Beamter. (His Secretary.)
Joseph Tramer, Richter von Leitersdorf. (Magistrate of Leitersdorf.)
Franz Auner, Richter von Gneibing. (Magistrate of the Village of Gneibing.)

Heinrich Falk, Gerichtsdiener. (Constable.)

Pepi Bossi, Kamerjungfer. (Femme de Chambre to the Countess.)
Marie Perger, Verwalterin. (The Landsteward's Wife and Housekeeper.)

Marie Stabert, Kochin. (Cook.)
Nanette Pesh, Lehrmadchen. (Cook's Apprentice.)

Marie Stodt. Juliana Knotz. — Stubenmadchen. (Under Housemaids.) — Babette Dicher.

Marie Ernst, Constantia Fritz. — Washerinen. (Washerwomen.) — Marie Berghold.

Joseph Eibl. — Mayerhof Magde. (Assistants.) — Constantia Tramer. Marie Kershberger.

Anton Pamer, Schafer. (Shepherd.) — Gartner. (Gardeners.) — Johan Nuss.

Valentin Laufer. Joseph Tramer. — Kutscher. (Coachmen.) — Anton Fink.

Joseph Meixnen. Joseph Amshl. Franz Storzer. — Hausknechte. (House Servants.) — Michel Maurer.

Michl. Greiner, Schmid (Smith.) — Mayerknechte. (Farm Servants.) — Johan Mullner. Mathias Stess. Jacob Baumkircher.

Lorenz Zach. — Maurer. (Masons.) — Michl. Brenn. Zimmermann. (Carpenter.) Augustin Lofter.

The Butler "Joseph" does not appear in the above list, as he was far too great a man to join such a train; while, on the other hand, his rank is much below that of the Verwalter. He escaped from the dilemma by acting as Master of the Ceremonies.

I need not add that the evening wound up with a dance and a supper, which made the old castle shake to its foundations with long forgotten gaiety. For until our coming, during nearly twenty dreary years, though there had been frequent guests within its walls, there had been no merriment since the fatal day when the poor Countess's son, her only child, and the last of his race, expired in her arms, and left her the desolate mistress of the vacant halls and innumerable apartments of Hainfeld, once the rallying point for mirth to all the country round.

It was in vain that we laughed and danced or tried to

be merry. The sad absence of our venerable and excellent friend cast a blank upon every thing, and it was really more to gratify her than ourselves that we engaged in such amusements. The ceremony just described indeed was entirely her ordering; yet she never rested, or could believe that we were happy, unless we took more active steps to show our contentment. To please her, therefore, some friends who live near us, and who had consented to pass Christmas and the New Year at the Castle, aided by our children's governess, a German lady, and by the children themselves, put a play of Kotzebue's in preparation. Nothing was thought of for some weeks but rehearsals, dresses, and decorations, and a stranger coming in would scarcely have believed that he was in what the Countess called a house of mourning. "Der Educationsrath" was accordingly to have been acted on the last day of the year, after the procession of the household and in their presence. The little piece above mentioned was chosen for our private theatricals, because it included no more characters than our party had strength for, and, being in one act, was so short that it put no one to any grave or great exertion, and promised to keep none of us out of bed beyond the sober hours which we had established in our peaceful castle. My eldest daughter, then about nine years old, was to take one of the principal characters, and the youngest who was about five and a half, was to speak the prologue.

The whole thing was put in motion by the Countess to amuse the children more than the grown up folks. But when the day approached, the eldest child took a stiff neck, and it was deemed impossible to proceed with a play of which the principal performer must have her head on one shoulder. The Countess was in despair at this *contretemps*, and one might have imagined her some disappointed young lady, so grievously did she lament over the interruption, for such only she had determined it should be. With her usual tone of authority she insisted upon all her friends remaining in the castle till the actors were ready, and as they were nothing loath, our society held together, and in due season we had our play.

The prologue was spoken with excellent emphasis and pertinent gesture—so quickly do children pick up a language when living amongst people who speak it constantly. The eldest girl went through her part in the play as if, instead of having applied to German only a few months, she had been bred and born behind the scenes of the Theatre-imperial at Vienna! The other characters were admirably sustained, and the whole thing went off with great and deserved applause. Every member of the household was present, and as many of the peasants as the room could hold were squeezed in. Their delight of course was extreme; but not a mortal there, either of actors or audience, seemed to enjoy the fun half so much as the poor, old, bed-ridden Countess, to whom a report of what was passing was made every quarter of an hour by some one of the party. At all stages of these festivities she mixed in every thing, gave her best advice, or issued her commands, even to the smallest details. Such indeed was the sort of juvenile excitement of her spirits, that we were really glad when these gaieties were at and end, for we almost feared she would work herself into a worse fever than she already pretty constantly had, in her intense anxiety to make us all so happy that any thoughts of leaving Hainfeld should be banished from our heads. This being, as I have already mentioned more than once, the grand object of what she called "the small remainder of her wretched existence in this solitary world."

CHAPTER XVII.

A CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.

A LONG while ago, when I was preparing for a voyage to China, I asked an old gentleman, well acquainted with those countries, to give me some hints for my guidance amongst a people so different in manners from those I had been accustomed to. The old boy, who seldom said any thing without a spice of sarcasm, reflected a moment, and then replied—

"Whenever you kill a Chinese, throw him as quietly and quickly as you can into the river!"

The satire here was directed against the absurd laws of China, which hold the person who is found nearest to a dead body responsible for the death. The effect of this is to drive away all assistance from a person who either is or may be thought to be dying—in short, to deprive him of help exactly at the time when it might be most useful to him, or when, if it could not be useful in saving his life, it might soothe and cheer his last moments. We laugh at the perverse folly of the Chinese, but in civilized Europe it is sometimes not much better. At Naples, for instance, a similar law prevails with that in the Celestial Empire; and I remember hearing of an English lady, who was driving in her open carriage in the most public street of Naples, when the coachman was seized with a fit and fell back into the carriage; the people stopped the horses, but as not a Neapolitan would come to the lady's assistance, the man might have died of suffocation from the position he was in, had not an English gentleman, who happened to be passing, rescued him from his awkward predicament. The coachman recovered, and nothing was said; but had he died on the spot, the gentleman would have been "had-up" as a culprit at the police office, just as if he had been in Canton!

A prudent man, therefore, when travelling in foreign parts, of which he does not well know the laws and customs, will do well either to put his humanity in his pocket, or be very careful how he pulls it out. The safest plan, no doubt, is to follow the example of the priest and the Levite, and pass on the other side of the way. But this will not always do, for external and internal reasons which need not be stated, and travellers, as well as those who remain at home, are sometimes obliged to stop and act on occasions when their indolence or their fears might prompt them to pass on as smartly as possible.

I was taking my usual constitutional walk one day at Hainfeld, on the high-road between the castle and the village of Feldbach, when I saw two women with dishevelled locks and wild gestures running towards me. On nearing them I heard their cries for assistance, and learned that a wretched man, whose wagon (as all carriages are called in that country) had been overturned, was lying under it, and was either dead or dying.

On reaching the spot I found, sure enough, the poor knecht, as they called him, lying on his face, with his arms stretched out, his head down-hill, and his legs underneath the inverted vehicle. Although it was only one of those light travelling carts with a gig seat fixed in it which we see every where, it was too heavy for me to remove altogether. As the man appeared to be dying, however, I prevailed on the women to assist me in moving the cart a little, and we succeeded at length in getting the left leg free. The other we could by no means disengage for a long time, and I despatched one of the women to a house not far off to beg for more masculine aid in our difficulty. I at last got out the other leg, and was glad to find it not broken.

My next care was to turn the knecht on his back, and then I saw to my horror that his face was as black as my boot—his eyes closed, and his mouth full of blood. He lay gasping for breath, each inspiration being accompanied by a whistling sound between a cry and a groan. I could just feel his pulse, and in doing so I found his arm as cold as ice. It seemed evident to me that he was dying.

My first operation was to slew him round, as we say at sea, so as to bring his head up hill, for the cart had fallen over a bank formed by the sloping side of the road raised above the flat alluvial plain of the Raab-Thal. I was glad to see the poor knecht's face become less black in the course of a minute or two, but as he was manifestly at any rate not long for this world, I began to think that I ought at all hazards to take some steps for bleeding him, the only chance for his life. I proceeded, therefore, to pull off his jacket, intending to tie up his arm with my handkerchief, and to open one of his veins with my penknife. I did bethink me, I must own, of the scrape I was likely to get into if I should fail, and be found by the boorish natives with a knife in my hand over the dead body of one of their countrymen! Just, however, as I had formed the resolution to make the necessary incision as well as I could, I espied a gentleman on horseback cantering past, and I thought I might as well hold a consultation before performing my first operation.

The stranger drew up his horse, gave the bridle to one of the women who stood wringing her hands by the side of the dying man, and, before I had time to say a word, cast off his hussar's cloak, drew from his pocket a strip of linen, bound up the man's arm, whipped a lancet out of his pocket, and opened a vein, in one-fifth part of the time it has taken me to relate the matter!

I was well content to be deprived of the honour of performing a surgical operation, and to act as assistant rather than principal, especially as I soon recognised in the stranger the surgeon of the cavalry regiment quartered at Feldbach, who, by strange good luck, had been called to visit a patient in the neighbourhood.

At first the blood refused to flow, and it was clear the doctor thought all was over with the poor knecht. Presently, however, on relaxing the bandage a little, and dashing handfulls of cold water repeatedly in his face, the blood began to stream, and his patient showed signs of life. Along with these, indeed, he soon gave convincing symptoms of being very tipsy—a circumstance which explained the mystery of his overturn.

By this time plenty of men had come up—the wagon was righted—the knecht's arm dressed—and no bones being broken, he was once more deposited in his vehicle, and driven home by the landlord of a public-house hard by. The doctor mounted his horse and galloped off, and I remained to reap the honours of the field, having got credit with the peasants for saving their companion's life—a credit which, in spite of all disclaimers, I most undeservedly retained amongst them during the remainder of the winter.

It has long been a disputed question amongst naval men what it would be the duty of an officer in command of a ship to do, in the event of a man falling overboard, while in chase of an enemy's vessel of equal or superior force. Like many questions, this one, now that it is settled, surprises us how any doubt could ever have arisen respecting it. But although there can be no doubt that, as in the nautical case, humanity must sometimes give way to a sterner duty, it may often prove doubtful on shore, how far we are called upon to turn out of our way to help, or attempt to help those, who have no claims upon our time, our attention, or our pockets.

The story of the Styrian knecht of the black face brings another to my recollection, in which the pros and cons of this question were practically brought into play, pretty much after the style of the parable.

On the 27th of June, towards the end of a little tour I had been making with my wife in the south of England, in the summer of 1831, the carriage passed over Shooter's Hill. As we drove down the London side of the steep, we overtook a wagon, or rather a van, heavily laden with furniture, proceeding in a most irregular course, and at far too great a rate, with none of its wheels locked. The weight was evidently too much for the horses, which, besides, were sadly misdirected by two men, who appeared at a loss what to do, and who were clearly not sober.

As we passed, I heard a loud shriek or shout, and on looking out of the carriage window, I saw one of the men lying flat on his face on the road, bawling lustily, and moving his legs up and down. He seemed to me to be

raving in a fit of drunkenness; but my servant, seeing me put my head out, declared that after the man fell, the wheel, he thought, had passed over his arm.

I ought, of course, instantly to have stopped to have ascertained what was the extent of the injury, if any. But, in the first place I thought the man was merely drunk; for I readily disbelieved the servant's account, from not wishing it to be true. I also, and more reasonably, wished to save my companion, who was in delicate health, from a scene of pain and misery; and lastly, I confess I did not much fancy the notion of having a drunken carter with a broken arm thrown on my care. Had it been my own carriage wheel which had done the mischief, or had we in any way, however remote, contributed to the accident, there could have been no doubt whatever; but as we were quite guiltless, I let the boy drive on. I satisfied myself, that as the man was amongst his own class, he would be well looked after, that my interference would do no good —in short—in short—like the two travellers in the inimitable parable already alluded to—and which, in its practical acceptation, has done such an infinity of good in the world—I passed on, leaving the wounded man half dead, or whole dead, for aught I knew!

After driving about a quarter of a mile along the road, I began to say to myself, "This is not altogether the right thing;—is this like the good Samaritan?"

And the word Samaritan, though I had given it no audible expression, kept ringing in my ears, as we trotted away from the scene, which no true Samaritan would have left. After proceeding for some distance, say a couple of miles, I became so worried and unhappy that I could not sit still, and I felt sure that the remembrance of the poor wretch, lying on his face in the dust, would never leave my mind. I resolved never again to pass such an object of distress. But I found that this resolution went no way to dissipate the remorse which was fast accumulating in my thoughts, and which, dashed with its portion of shame for my want of decision as well as of humanity, was disturbing my peace of mind at a great rate.

"What is to be done?" I asked myself impatiently, for

I had wrought myself into a fever. This question, properly asked, was easily answered,--to go back again, surely. "But in what way go back?" To drive two or three miles over the same road again, merely to ascertain the fact of the man being severely and dangerously wounded, might have answered no good purpose. And while I was puzzling and puzzling what to do, or rather how to do it, we came in sight of the Green Man at Blackheath ; and it instantly occurred to me that the people of this great inn must be quite familiar with such accidents, and of course that they would be able to put me in the way of assistance. In answer to my question whether any surgeon lived thereabouts, the waiter said, "Oh yes, sir, there is the door of Mr. Gemsee's house, an excellent surgeon." Off I ran, and was enchanted to find him at home, and quite willing to accompany me to the scene of action; so that in less than two minutes the doctor and I were in full swing trot back again.

I could detect, at the distance of more than half a mile, a crowd on one side of the road, close to a well-loaded van, which, on a nearer approach, I recognised as the fatal cause of the mischief. We quickened our pace, under the smack of the driver's whip, who took much interest in the whole affair.

A melancholy scene of pain, anxiety, and confusion, presented itself to our eyes, as we separated the crowd to the right and left, and made our way to the centre. The wounded man, all covered with blood and dust, and as pale, wellnigh, as a dead person, was supported on a chair in front of a neat little cottage, the flowers and shrubs before which had been all crushed down by the bystanders. Two women, the only persons in the group who appeared to have their senses about them, held the poor fellow's arm and his head, and bathed his temples with cold water. All the rest, about twenty in number, were speaking at once, each one suggesting something, but no one acting, or knowing how to act. A surgeon had been sent to, they said, but he was not at home, and what was next to be done no mortal could decide. The man's companion was drunk, noisy, and worse than useless, and the help with

which the rest of the party were encumbering the sufferer only added to his distress.

I at once took command of the ground under the doctor, insisted upon silence, and brushed away the crowd, to let the wounded man have room to breathe. The surgeon called for a pair of scissors, and slitting the coat and shirt from the wrist upwards, exposed the whole arm in a moment—a dreadful sight!

The wheel had passed over the limb, nearly midway between the elbow and the shoulder, crushing the bone in such a manner as to produce what is called a compound fracture of the worst kind. The doctor and I exchanged nods of perfect understanding upon the point that this was not a case for field practice, and that our patient must be conveyed to the nearest hospital.

"What is to be done, however," I asked, "in the first place?"

"We can do nothing," said the surgeon, "but strap the arm across the breast, and convey the poor fellow in a chaise to Guy's Hospital in the Borough."

"Very well," I cried, "is there a chaise to be hired here, or shall I take him in my carriage?"

"Oh," cried out one of the crowd, "I have a chaise and pair on the hill here, all ready, and if you choose to order it, you shall have it in five minutes."

In less than that time, and before the surgeon, with infinite care, and no small skill, had gathered together the shattered limb, and bound it gently over the man's breast, the chaise stood before the cottage-door. Our patient being seated, the doctor prepared to take his place beside him, assuring me, that he would not lose sight of him till he was comfortably lodged, and placed under proper hands. Before we parted, however, I wished to give him a fee for his professional services; but this he positively refused, and begged that, as I was to pay for the postchaise, he might be allowed to contribute his share in the shape of attendance.

As the chaise drove softly away, I turned to the rich-looking owner of the vehicle, and asked what I was in

his debt. So much for the horses, and so much for the tolls, sir."

"What!" I said, "will you not, on such an occasion, contribute something? The doctor would take nothing, you observed; I think you might go the length of sixpence for the tolls."

"No, sir, no; I'll thank you to pay me for the gates. I have a right to that, and I'll have my right."

I next turned to the women, who had taken more trouble than all of us put together; but, though they were evidently very poor, they would at first accept nothing; and it was only by my representing to them that their clothes, which the poor fellow's wound had stained, would cost a good deal to put to rights, that I prevailed on them to receive half-a-crown a-piece.

At all events, the lower classes, said I to myself, are more disinterested than the class just above them; but I had scarcely spoken when the crowd shoved a man forward.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"I ran up the hill for the chaise, sir."

"So then," I observed, "you won't even run a couple of hundred yards to assist a brother workman, who has broken his arm, unless you are paid for your trouble—eh?"

"You told me to go up the hill, and I went," was the dogged reply; "so I had another sixpence to fork out."

On returning to the Green Man, it was necessary to water the horses, which had now gone three times over the ground between Shooter's hill and the inn. During this detention the postillion entertained the assembled household, waiters, housemaids, boots, and hostlers, with a full, true, and particular account of the carter's shattered arm. I motioned to the head waiter to give the narrator a glass of beer, and mechanically pinched a final sixpence between my finger and thumb to pay for the generous draught. But the magnanimous domestic only waved his glass-cloth, and declined the payment. The beer, to be sure, was from his master's tap; but I thanked him with

sincerity; for even the shadow of disinterestedness pleases us, when we are in a humour to be pleased.

Mr. Gemsee, the humane and liberal surgeon who accompanied the wounded man to the hospital, promised to write me a note of his proceedings; and accordingly, a day or two afterwards, he sent me the following account:

"Blackheath Hill, July 2, 1831.

"Dear Ssr,—I have the pleasure to inform you, that I saw the unfortunate young man safely to Guy's Hospital, and committed him to the care of my friend Mr. Sampson Cavey, who is a dresser under Mr. Bransby Cooper. I went directly to Mr. Galloway, the assistant-surgeon, but he was from home. Upon my return to the hospital, I found Mr. Cavey had written a note to Mr. Cooper, who would come immediately. I went to see the poor fellow yesterday, and am happy to say he is doing as well as can be expected, and they hope to save the arm.

"I am your most obedient servant,

(Signed) "C. Gemsee."

I had it not in my power to visit Guy's Hospital for some days; but when I did, I could scarcely recognise in the pale and subdued countenance of the well-tended patient, the noisy, excited, and half demolished wagoner of Shooter's hill. He neither knew me, nor recollected any of the circumstances; and when I began to relate them, supposing nothing could be so interesting, he looked me impatiently in the face, turned his head round, and begged in a peevish voice, to be left alone. As he was in admirable hands, and in no need of any further assistance from me, I took no more charge of him. When, however, the other day, I came to write down these notes of the adventure, I felt some curiosity to know what had become of my friend; whether he had lived or died, and especially whether or not his arm had been saved. I thought the best way to find out was to write to the secretary of Guy's Hospital, from whom, by return of post, I received the following statement:—

"Guy's Hospital, 24th Feb. 1836.

"Sir,—In reply to your inquiries respecting William Skudder, I find by the books that he came here the 27th June, 1831, with a badly fractured arm, and went out of the hospital on the 29th January, 1832. And on the 19th February following, he returned, having broken his arm again, and left us, 21st May, 1832, since which we know nothing about him.

"Yours, very faithfully,

(Signed) "James Browell."

I insert the above communication chiefly to show the accuracy with which the details of these admirable public institutions are managed and recorded. May we not reasonably trace the origin, as well as the voluntary and ample support of these truly charitable asylums, in a great measure, to the beautiful and instructive parable above alluded to?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ALARM.

SHORTLY after the festivities of Christmas and the New Year, which the good old Countess had got up for our amusement, she came to see, much to our satisfaction, that we really preferred the quiet life of her ancient castle, with only herself and our children as company. There happened, indeed, to be several little girls in the castle, orphan daughters of former dependents on the Countess, who proved of infinite use to our children in learning German. Almost every evening these young folks got up some piece of their own invention; some scene from Kotzebue's farces; or, what was a thousand times more farcical, a tragedy. For example, we were one night indulged with Schiller's play of William Tell, a piece in which there are upwards of forty characters, but our bold theatricals undertook this splendid tragedy with only four actors!

The poor Countess lay in her bed and laughed at the account of these proceedings, and more than ever encouraged us to sit with her, and read or chat by her bedside; and we saw, or thought we saw, that she was gradually gaining strength; and though it was obvious to every eye that she never could hope to be any thing but a confirmed invalid, we had strong reason to believe that the periodical accession of illness which beset her every winter, was for this season gone past. Under this impression, as January gradually slipped away on our happy retirement, and February began to advance, we considered it right to bethink us once more of our journey, albeit we were not very anxious to move, and we saw that any such proposition might half or wholly put an end to our generous hostess.

We could not remain in Hainfeld Castle for the rest of our lives, however; and, all things considered, we believed it right to take our departure while the Countess was in tolerable health. But, in order not to give her more pain than was absolutely necessary, we carried on our preparations quite quietly; we also settled it with ourselves that a certain day should at all events form our latest for remaining; but in order to ease off matters, we agreed to name an earlier day, and if sorely pressed, as we knew we should be, to relax accordingly. Thus we considered it well to fix the 15th of March as our nominal day: but that we might be prevailed upon to stay till the 23d, or even a day or two later.

It was accordingly arranged that I should break the fatal subject to the Countess on the morning of the 1st of March, or as soon afterwards as I might find a good opportunity. I felt, indeed, as if I were about to attempt the good old lady's life, and could scarcely screw my courage to the sticking point, and at one blow destroy the sole happiness, as she frequently called it, which remained to her in this wide and desolate world, which she ardently longed to leave, in order, as she often said, to join those who had torn her heart away with them.

Our plan of operation was, that we should start from Hainfeld after an early breakfast, with four of the farm horses from the neighbouring village. These were to be relieved by those of the Countess half way on the road to Gratz; and thus we hoped to reach that city to dine, and yet that we should have daylight enough to reach Feistritz, the country seat of Mr. Thinnfeld, a most intelligent and agreeable person, with whom he had formed a a great friendship during the winter. There we purposed to remain for a few days, and then to go on to Vienna, in time for the fag end of the gay season, to which, however, we looked with some dread, after nearly half a year's rustication at Hainfeld, the most completely out of the way corner in the known world.

Old Joseph, whom a quarter of a century's service had made well acquainted with his mistress and her peculiari-

ties, shook his head in silent and prophetical despair, as we made our preparations; and for once in his life he did not communicate to the Countess what was going on in the castle.

"If you go away now," he said one morning; "and if you take away your darling little boy from the Gräfin—who reminds her of her own lost child—if you do not stay to read with her, and talk with her; if the children no more sit by her bed-side and amuse her with their fun and pranks, you'll break her heart. She will never more bear to live in this great castle alone; and there is no one in this country to take your places if you go."

All this was so obvious that every time I came near an occasion of speaking to her about going away, the words stuck in my throat, and I could not utter a syllable. Day by day, too, the little child wound himself closer round the affectionate old lady's heart, and bound, as it were, its broken fragments together. He would sit for hours at her feet, or creep up to her pillow, and lay his hands fondly on her care-worn cheeks, quite happy to be near her.

Day by day, too, she grew upon all our best affections; and as she unlocked her long neglected or wasted sympathies, and gave vent to feelings which she thought dead, and had heretofore considered it almost a duty not to revive, we felt our obligations not to desert her increase to such a degree that we often said to ourselves "we can never leave this spot while our venerable friend lives!"

On the 24th of February, and happily before we had insinuated any thing of our intended, or rather our projected departure, the Countess became suddenly much worse. She was seized in the night with so violent a fit of coughing, accompanied by fever and pain, that we feared our doubts and difficulties would be but too speedily resolved. She rallied, however, in the day; and when we were admitted she seemed almost as much herself as ever. The first symptom of really increased illness was her inability to listen to my reading Goëthe's Wilhelm Meister to her, about noon, one of her favourite amusements. Al-

though I knew but very little of the language, she insisted upon my going on, and with the most wonderful degree of animation explained the meaning of the words which I did not understand, or helped me to the meaning of sentences of which I knew all the words, but could not disentangle the intricacies of the German construction.

On the 27th of February, I think it was, she was in the midst of one of these explanations, when a fit of coughing interrupted the lesson. Next day she sent for me at the usual hour, and set me to reading; but although she listened, or appeared to listen attentively, she never interrupted me. In order to prevent her speaking, I read on for about an hour without once pausing, till I observed her comfortably asleep. Sleep to her, alas! was such a rarity that I purposely continued my soporific for a long time, and at length she awoke much refreshed. She insisted upon my giving her an account of the impressions left on my mind by the story I had been reading. This was rather difficult to do. Had I in the same interval perused, say one-tenth part of what I had just gone over, and very slowly, carefully, and repeatedly examined each passage, I might, even without the help of a dictionary, have made out the sense pretty well. But as it was, the result appeared like that of a very light, but not unconnected dream, possessed of a certain vague interest, and accompanied by the consciousness that what was passing was all visionary.

In the evening of that day, the Countess begged me to read over to her the same passages, assuring me that I would now understand the whole; but I had scarcely commenced before she fell into such violent fits of coughing, that I expected to see her expire before me. One fit lasted full ten minutes, without intermission, and at each inspiration she groaned, or, as she herself said, she barked in such a manner, that it was evident her lungs were called upon to do more than they were fit for; and accordingly, at last, she gasped for breath as I have seen dying persons do. But it passed over.

On that night she had still a sharper fever than usual,

and so on, every night worse and worse, till we all became alarmed; and it would have been almost impossible, if not utterly absurd and cruel, to have spoken of leaving her under such circumstances. Some accidental word escaped me, however, in the course of conversation about the repair of one of my carriage wheels. This threw her into violent agitation, and she cried out,—

"Oh, do not, do not leave me to die amongst servants! For God's sake stay to close my eyes, and lay me in my grave! I must go soon—this cannot last long."

Thus all our intentions of leaving the castle were as irresistibly frustrated as if a giant of old had been its master instead of a bedridden, broken-hearted, widowed lady, the last of an ancient race, long renowned in the country of her adoption, which to her had been one continued scene of war, misery, and disappointment.

Things wore on most painfully till the evening of the 4th of March, when the faithful and affectionate Joseph came weeping to me to say that his mistress was quite delirious, and that her fever was raging furiously. I went instantly to her bedside, but she knew no one. Her pulse was at a hundred and twenty beats in the minute, and every thing seemed to indicate that her last moments were approaching. I visited her many times during the night, and seldom entered the room without expecting to find her gone.

Although the Countess had the most profound want of faith in all medicines and in all medical men, she allowed the village doctor, who happened to be rather a clever man, to call every day to see her, more, I believe, that she might hear the gossip of the neighbourhood, than with any idea of profiting by his professional skill. We sent for him of course; but as he, like most country doctors, passed the greater part of every night on horseback, it was not till five in the morning that we could catch him, and by that time she had fallen into a quiet sleep.

He at once said that further aid must be sent for, and we despatched the carriage to Radkersberg for the most eminent physician of those parts. He did not come till

the evening, however; and, in the mean time, the patient recovered so much, that we could scarcely persuade ourselves that she had been ill. The Countess listened with much interest to all the physician said, answered all his questions, begged him to write his prescriptions, and allowed him go away with the full conviction on his mind that she was the most docile of patients, and the steadiest believer in the efficacy of medicine. I saw her smile as he left the room, and again when I caught up the prescriptions, and despatched an express with them to the village. In my turn I smiled, when, an hour or two afterwards, I observed the empty bottles, and remembered her many anathemas against the whole family of drugs. She said nothing, however; but on passing through the ante-room, I learned from her maid that the whole of the medicines had been thrown out of the window!

But our venerable friend, though she seemed to rally, and was certainly in as cheerful spirits as ever, had gotten a severe shake. Her nights were passed in coughing, high fever, and sharp rheumatic pains; but in the daytime she appeared so well, that it was scarcely possible to believe her dying, in spite of her constant assertions to that effect. I ventured once, at this stage of her illness, to say that I wondered to hear her talking of death, when, to all appearance, she seemed as well as we had ever seen her.

"I think," said she, "I must be allowed to be the best judge of my own condition. And under the conviction," she continued, "that I shall speedily depart, I have written a few lines to you on a subject which hangs heavily on my mind. Take it to your room, read it, and think upon its contents, and afterwards we can talk the matter over."

I was astonished to find that she had strength to write at all; but the handwriting, though a little tremulous, was quite distinct. The note was as follows:—

"My Dear Sir,—"There is a circumstance that will require all your skill to rectify, if you have the kindness,

as I trust in God you will have, to place my poor shattered head in the grave, where it can alone find repose.

"Advantage was taken of the absence of the family to place the bodies of strangers in our vault—(I say *our*, for it is personal property). The bailiff, out of negligence, or still worse motive, did not cause so much as one of them to be removed. Think of my anguish when, at the last awful funeral,* I saw no place was left for my coffin! I am assured that a family now extinct had a vault opposite to ours. Now, I conjure you, let a coffin be removed to the place where it ought to be, and let us three be, as we were, and I trust shall be eternally, mingling our ashes together.

"Do not spare money; all will be repaid to you. It will take a day, I believe, to arrange this business. I do not think you will understand what I write; but I shall try to explain the thing to you. I am sure Heaven will bless dear Mrs. Hall, and your darlings, and you, for all your respectable goodness to me."

I took the earliest opportunity of her being visible to assure her that all that was requisite should be done; but I again said I could not see any reason for her thinking of such matters just now. She only smiled, shook her head, and said,—"You'll see—you'll see."

It may seem a little shocking, but scarcely can be thought strange, that we should have felt a hope at that moment that the good old lady's words would come true. Yet there surely was nothing but the truest friendship in the wish. She was all alone in the world, helpless and hopeless. In mind, so far as this life offered relief, she was without consolation; while her body was torn by almost constant raaking pains, not only without a shadow of any expectation of amendment, but with the daily experience of things becoming less and less tolerable. It was clear, then, that whenever we went from her—as go from her it was evident we must, sooner or later—the

* That of her son, in 1817.

poor Countess would once more be left without a friend to close her eyes—altogether deserted, like a dismasted wreck on the dismal ocean of life. Under such a painful combination of circumstances, it was surely not uncharitable to wish that the awful moment should come to pass before our other and more imperative duties should carry us far from her bedside, and beyond the possibility of rendering her any assistance.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CATASTROPHE.

"I HOPE," said the Countess to me one day, "that you have given up all idea of moving from Hainfeld for the present. You must be as well aware as I am of the turn which things have been taking; and therefore I trust you will do me the kindness to stay here till I die."

I should mention, that for about a week after the curious note about the vault, which I gave in the last chapter, was written, the Countess had gradually got better, and she was now—that is to say, on the 14th of March—as well, according to the report of the people about her, as she had been for many years at this season of the year. Accordingly, it had again come into our heads that we ought to be thinking of our departure; since, for aught we saw or heard from the doctor and her attendants, the old lady might still live for years.

The request, therefore, to stay by her till she died, was a little startling; for if such an engagement were entered into, it was impossible to say how it could be fulfilled, without much more serious inconvenience than it was either our desire or our duty to incur. As the Countess spoke in a cheerful and almost playful tone, I replied in the same tone—

"Pray, ma'am, when do you mean to die—for something will depend upon that?"

The old lady laughed at my taking the matter up in this way, and exclaimed—

"You are quite right—you cannot be expected to stay here for an indefinite period; and you would be as wrong to promise it, as I should be unreasonable to exact it. But," added she, in a more serious tone, and after pausing a minute or two, "I shall not keep you long. You know well how fatal to my happiness this period of the year has often proved. The 22d of March is the most unfortunate

day in my life. My husband expired on that day, four-and-twenty years ago, and on that day, I think I may safely say to you, that I shall die!"

I looked, of course, not a little surprised. I cannot say I was shocked; for I could scarcely believe the Countess in earnest. Before I could muster any words to express what was proper on the occasion, she went on—

"You may very well be startled at such a declaration; but nevertheless you will see that what I say will prove true. My apparent recovery just now is all fallacious and external—within, the vital principle is fast ebbing away. I have been too familiar with disease not to know its marks. The hand of death is upon me, and I rejoice to find it so. I cannot be more prepared for the awful event than I now am; and I consider that Providence has sent you here at this trying season, to minister to my last moments. I shall die happy, quite happy, if you are by my side to close my eyes, if Mrs. Hall will stay near me, and if your little children will cheer me with their smiles as I leave the world. I shall then feel not only not deserted, but surrounded by friends. This, indeed, for many long years has been my only wish on earth, though unaccompanied by the slightest hope of its being gratified. How could I expect," continued she, smiling, "that a family of my countryfolks would have either inclination or leisure to devote themselves to such a blighted vestige of humanity as I am?"

I assured her cordially, that I and all my family felt as she could wish, and that our duty to her was now amongst our most binding obligations.

"Well, then," cried she, "oblige me by staying over the equinox. It will come in a few days. Will you promise me that?"

"Surely," I said, "we shall be most happy. We had intended," I added, "to proceed towards Vienna about the 20th; but we shall not now think of moving, however well you may be, before the 30th."

"Ah!" she sighed, "that will be long enough. Many days before that time arrives, you will, I trust, have laid me quietly in my grave; and I shall be joined again to

those beings for whom alone I wished to live, and for whose sakes I am so anxious to die."

From that time forward she never spoke more on the subject. To all appearance, also, she went on steadily improving in health, or rather not falling into greater illness. The only striking difference in her was that she could not read her letters; but she listened with much interest to their being read by us; and she insisted upon our resuming our daily readings with her as before her late violent attack. She conversed, too, nearly as formerly, and related anecdotes with all her wonted animation.

So complete, indeed, appeared to be her re-establishment, that, on the 20th of March, I wrote to her friends to state that I fully believed all immediate danger was past. The post-bag, however, was scarcely closed before I was summoned to the Countess's room, where I found her in a high fever, and talking incoherently. The letters were taken out of the bag, and an express got ready to send off the moment the doctor came and pronounced his opinion, of which, indeed, we had little doubt. But by the time he came, the vigorous old lady was taken better, if I may use such an expression ; and having slept more soundly than she had done for years, she awoke so much stronger and heartier than she had been before, that all the world pronounced this to have been the crisis of her illness ; and as that had passed, all would go well. So far there was an important change—she was left free from pain, a situation so new to her that she scarcely knew, she said, how to enjoy it sufficiently.

But all this was no more than the flaring up of the taper just about to be extinguished! The equinox came, and found the Countess all but dead. On the 23d, and less than twenty-four hours after the time she had herself specified, the fatal blow was struck, and our poor friend was no more !

During the greater part of the 22d, the "day of her doom," as she called it, she preserved her faculties entire. Her strength, however, was manifestly on the decline, and her eyes began to give indication of change. In the middle of the day I carried all the children to take a last look

of their venerable friend who had been so uniformly kind to them. On holding up the infant of whom she had been so fond, and opening a chink of the shutter to let a little light shine on his face, she held out her arms, and exclaimed—

"Oh, my dear, dear baby, is that you ! How do you do my sweet, sweet child ?"

I held him close to her and made him touch her cheek, which he did in his usual gentle way, and when she pressed his little hand, he looked her full in the face, and said, as he was wont to do every evening when carried away, "Ta ! ta !"

"Ta ! ta ! my own dear infant," exclaimed the dying woman. "You have been a blessing to me this winter. God send you may prove as great a comfort to your parents, who have been my protectors in my last hour of need."

I then gently drew the little man back that the others might come in front of her.

"Ah, Eliza ! my dear Eliza ! how do you do ? give me your hand my sweet girl. And you, too, dear Fanny Emily ! God bless you both. Your society has often made me happy. God bless and keep you." And then cordially shaking them both by the hand, she looked up to the governess, and cried, "Ah, Mdslle. Herthum, how are you ? Is it true that you have so kindly taken charge of my little boy during his maid's illness? He is a good child. But you are generous and kind to them all."

So saying, she laid her head back, closed her eyes, and to these members of our party she never spoke more. Nor did they ever see her again alive, except for a moment when I carried them to the room next day when she was almost gone. I wished them to learn how to look upon such scenes with composure, and without feeling that mysterious sort of dread of a deathbed which belongs to ignorance, and which sometimes prevents persons being useful, who, were it not for these imaginary fears, might render important services to their dying friends.

Some hours after she had taken leave of the children, when we were sitting by her, and expecting her to go off

every moment, she opened her eyes, and said, with almost her usual strength of voice.

"Yes!—you are always by my bed-side. You have been my protectors and friends, and you will soon have to close my eyes. I shall soon be away, and God knows how anxiously I pray to be released from this dreadful suffering. I die contented, however, when I have you about me to see me laid in my grave, and know that, in spite of all the fears which have haunted me for so long a time, I shall not be left forlorn and desolate to die amongst strangers. You may well be happy to think of the good you have done and are doing me."

After this our poor friend became gradually worse and worse. Her pain and cough increased, and during the night when we sat by her, though she evidently recognised us, she could scarcely articulate her words, and these were often disjointed, and uttered at long intervals. In this way the fatal 22d of March passed over and left her still alive. Not so the 23d; and thus the old lady erred only one day in her calculations.

During the morning she sunk so much that it was only by inference we could make out that she still possessed her mind. Towards sunset all pain seemed to have left her, and she lay, almost for the first time during her illness, quite tranquil in appearance, and without uttering a groan. Of course we scarcely ever quitted her bed-side, and once, I think about seven in the evening, on seeing her make an effort to speak, I placed my ear close to her lips, but could distinguish no sound besides the fearful and well-known death-rattle in her throat. She lay quite motionless, and I had not the least idea that she could hear what was said, or that she still possessed any of her faculties; but in order to try, I said to her slowly and distinctly, and in a cheerful voice—

"We are all here, ma'am—you shall not be deserted."

Upon which, to my great surprise, she lifted her hand an inch or two above the bed-clothes, and when I took it in mine and kissed it, I felt her press my hand three several times, as much as to say "I understand you perfectly." I whispered to Mrs. Hall to kiss the Countess's

hand, upon which she raised it as before, and turning to us, opened her eyes, from which all life was not yet fled, though very little was left. We felt quite satisfied, however, that she was conscious of our being present, and that so far as that kind of protection was concerned, for which she had so often expressed a hope, she was gratified in her last moments. About nine o'clock, when we had left the room for a minute, we were suddenly called back by the report that our venerable friend was just expiring, and we felt grieved that even for a moment we had quitted her side. Her hands were now of an icy coldness, and her breathing quick and feeble. But the expression of her face was so placid, and I may say even sweet, that it indicated a mind and a body at length at rest. I could barely feel her pulse, and at eleven o'clock she quietly breathed her last; and the noble family of Purgstall, once so numerous and so renowned in Austria, became extinct.

The scene in the room was highly characteristic, though very different, I suspect, from what generally takes place elsewhere on such occasions. The most prominent actor of the party was poor Joseph, the Countess's faithful servant, in whose arms, in the same bed, eighteen years before, her son, her only child, had expired. This affectionate creature, as I have already mentioned, had promised his mistress at that time, when deserted apparently by all the rest of the world, that he never would leave her while she lived—and well he kept his word. Though a hardy old soldier, who had served in all the rugged campaigns of Napoleon, he was quite unmanned by the approaching dissolution of his revered mistress. We could not console him, and made no attempt. We gave him the first place, however; and, in spite of his remonstrances, made him take the chair nearest to the dying Countess's head, while we sat lower down at the side of the bed. All the women who used to be in attendance in turn upon her, as well as the cook, housemaids, and others, were assembled in the apartment, each with a nicely folded snow-white pocket handkerchief in hand, and while some wept from affection, and some from companionship, they all went through the motions of grief. The men servants of the

house, to the number of a dozen at least, came into the room from time to time, and gathered in groups round the bed, or stood near the door, but all in silence, and without any outward show of sorrow, though I fully believe they all felt very deeply.

The Countess, indeed, was universally beloved by her dependents, to whom, on all occasions, she spoke not only with gentleness but with respect; and I heard it remarked by one of the oldest amongst them, who had grown grey in her service, that she never once addressed a servant with the pronoun "Du," or thou, which general usage permits to inferiors, but always with "Sie," which is used amongst equals. In all essential matters, she was equally considerate; and in losing her, the whole of that part of the country lost a friend on whose generosity, in all times of trouble, they could safely rely.

The male domestics whom I have just mentioned, were not elegant, brisk fellows, in gay liveries, but coarsely clad, rough-haired, labourer-looking men—"Haus Knechte," as they are called—truly hewers of wood and drawers of water. So that their appearance on this occasion, by the side of their dying mistress, looked not a little strange. Lastly came the parish priest, for although the Countess was a strict Protestant, she had always lived on friendly terms with the Roman Catholic clergy of the neighbourhood. This gentleman, in particular, she had always esteemed; and Joseph, knowing how much it would gratify him, as well as how satisfactory it would prove to the people on the estate, very judiciously suggested his being invited. With corresponding delicacy and good taste, the priest did not attempt to interfere with what was going on but sat at a little distance, as a deeply interested spectator, but no more.

Old Joseph, however, who was a good Catholic, thinking, I suppose, it might do no harm to give his mistress's soul a chance, took advantage of my back being turned, and stuck a lighted candle into the old lady's hand, a few minutes before she breathed her last. I was startled

by this proceeding, and would have removed the candle; but Joseph, down whose cheeks the tears were flowing abundantly, beseeched me to let it remain. The effect was not a little picturesque, as it lighted up the dying woman's face, and showed every change of countenance with the utmost distinctness. The lights and shades which it cast on the surrounding anxious groups—for every one now closed round the bed—were in the highest degree striking, and the moment of our poor friend's death might have furnished admirable materials for a picture.

When all was over, Joseph's grief became excessive and uncontrollable : quite forgetting the man, he lifted up his voice and wept like a child. Poor fellow! he had lost his best and almost his only friends—by whose side he had served with the habitual devotion of a thorough-bred soldier, during two-and-twenty years of deep suffering, and through many seasons of severe trial. For the few days preceding the Countess's death he had supported himself with great propriety, but when he saw the breath of life ebbing fast away from his beloved mistress, and the intervals between her last faint gasps becoming longer and longer, his stock of fortitude was completely exhausted—and in spite of admonitory taps on the arm by one of the attendant maidens, whose feelings were less excited, he cried bitterly. We stood by the old man's side, but said nothing. We respected his grief, in which we shared, though in a very different degree ; for even at that solemn moment, we felt no small satisfaction to think that a person so estimable was finally relieved from a load of bodily and mental distress all but intolerable, and translated to a scene of eternal tranquillity—there, as she fervently hoped, to be indissolubly united to those, for whose sake alone she had considered life worth possessing.

It would be wrong to wind up this history without stating what became of so principal a personage as Joseph (our Caleb Balderstone) after his mistress was gone.

By one of those unaccountable anomalies in human

conduct which—most particularly in the case of wills—set all calculations at defiance, the Countess left this old and faithful domestic so very scanty a provision, that it was scarcely possible for him to exist upon it, especially as he was no longer fit for service, and as, moreover, he had married while in the Countess's employment, under the very natural hope of being amply provided for during the rest of his days.

As soon as the destitute nature of his situation was ascertained, I wrote to the late Lady Ashburton, the Countess's niece, who was deeply attached to her aunt, and who on one occasion, when with the Countess at Hainfeld, had owed her life to Joseph's great exertion in preventing their carriage from oversetting—an over exertion, indeed, which seriously and permanently injured his health. Her Ladyship, by return of post, wrote not only to me, but in the kindest terms to Joseph himself, saying, she only waited to hear how much would make him perfectly comfortable, before settling a pension upon him. This was soon ascertained, and an answer was written. Most unfortunately, however, Lady Ashburton died in the interval quite unexpectedly, and before the necessary steps could be taken in this matter. In strictness, Joseph had no claims upon Lord Cranstoun, the successor to Lady Ashburton's fortune—but, under all the peculiarities of the case, I felt it right to lay the foregoing details before his Lordship; and he at once, and in the most generous manner, settled on Joseph the full pension contemplated by Lady Ashburton. By this addition to his income, the poor fellow has been placed in easy, and even affluent circumstances for the remainder of his life.

CHAPTER XX.

THE VAULT.

On retiring to our rooms after all was over, it was vain to think of sleep, and we past most of the remaining part of the night in reflecting on the strange nature of the history just ended, and which, if it had been feigned, instead of real, might well have been called too improbable for belief. Who, indeed, could have ventured to calculate that at the close of a life so protracted as that of the Countess, she who had been so long without seeing the face of a countryman, should be attended on her death-bed by the son of one of her earliest friends ?—for she and my father were very intimate in their youth ;—or that, after nearly twenty years of constant anxiety and fear, lest she should be left to die amongst servants and foreigners, without a friend to close her eyes or cheer her solitude, in a far distant region, in which she had outlived all the connexions she had formed with the land of her adoption, there should at last come to her enchanted castle a family of her country-folks, as if by the help of some good fairy ? Still more strange did it seem that any such family should have been at once able and willing to devote so much time to her, just at the very moment required ; or, finally, that they should happen to be so exactly suited to her tastes and habits that all its members, young as well as old, were capable of contributing to restore to her, as far as possible, those comforts of domestic society of which her own act of expatriation in the first place, and then the successive deaths of all her new connexions, had deprived her !

It was, moreover, the merest accident in the world that the invitation she sent to us, in the most round-about way imaginable, should ever have reached us at all. The lady through whom it was sent, as I have already mentioned at the beginning of the narrative, had actually left

Rome when the message reached her, and before she returned there, we had also left it. It was quite accidental our meeting at the inn at Albano; and there for the first time heard of the Countess. It is true that we did know, in a vague way, that such a person existed; but assuredly we had no more thoughts of visiting her than we had of visiting the Cham of Tartary; still less did we ever dream of passing six entire months in her castle in Styria, of which remote country (except from our school-day recollections of books of geography) we knew nothing. Even at the time we received the invitation we had scarcely a notion that we should ever be able to visit the Countess, or even to go near that part of Europe.

When, however, we did come to the castle of Hainfeld, found ourselves very happily established there, and saw how greatly we contributed to the Countess's comfort, we began at times to consider seriously what would happen when we should be obliged to leave her. Right glad would she have been if we had offered to take up our permanent quarters with her; but this, she knew, was out of the question, though, as we afterwards found, she had often discussed it with Joseph; and once or twice she hinted it to Mrs. Cownie, our child's maid, during the many hours they were together every day.

To us she often said, half in joke, half in earnest, that she hoped we would stay and see her out, and not desert her in her last hours. But as we could detect no valid reason for supposing she might not live for years, we took great care not to involve ourselves in so vague an engagement, having in our minds the proverbial longevity of old ladies. As the periods which we successively named for our departure approached we became more sensible of our affection and respect for her; and the more of course we dreaded the baneful effect which our abandoning her might have. At these moments, I am half ashamed to own, it irresistibly occurred to our minds that the best possible thing the good lady could do, both for her own comfort and for that even of her most attached friends, would be to slip quietly out of the world, as soon as might be. We did not, indeed, go so far as to

hint this obliging wish to her; but I sometimes thought she read what was passing in our minds; at least she said more than once, "Only wait a little; wait till the equinox comes, and you'll see me go out like a candle burned down to the socket."

But when the strange event actually turned out true almost to the very letter—we could not help half feeling that we had been somehow parties to the act of removing our excellent friend from the world! And I was rather annoyed with myself when I found I could not lay my hand on my heart and declare that I should have been pleased were the Countess alive again, and as well, or rather as ill as ever!

There came across me, however, many feelings of grief for her loss, so bitter that I felt irritated with myself for having rejoiced at her death; and when the hours came round at which I used always to take my station by her bedside, and read or talk with her, or listen to her lively and instructive conversation, and still more when I saw her, in my imagination, fondling my little boy, or praising my eldest daughter's looks, or laughing at the funny remarks of the youngest, or entreating their mother to read her another chapter of a Waverly novel, I felt—and still feel—the tears come to my eyes, and I deplore her loss without any unkind and cold-hearted qualification.

On the next day, the Countess's body was exposed in state in the castle chapel. She was dressed, according to the custom of the country, in her best black gown, with a plain muslin cap tied round with a broad black ribbon, a style of dress which is much less disagreeable than the "odious woollen" grave clothes with which we disfigure our defunct friends in England. Be that as it may, the good old Countess's remains were exposed on a high and rather elegant platform in the chapel; and on the pall which covered it were placed the scutcheons of the family, all in a reversed position, indicating, as we were told, that the person lying in state was the last of the family; for so busy had death been, that not another Purgstall now existed of a race at one time the most numerous and flourishing in Austria.

Generally speaking, funerals in those countries take place very soon after death; but on this occasion, owing to some technical difficulties about placing the body of a Protestant in the Roman Catholic church, the Countess lay in state for four days. One of these, the 25th of March, happened to be a festival of the church, and a bright sunny morning; and this fortunate combination of an idle and a fine day brought not only the whole of the little world of the Raab Thal, our truly Happy Valley! —but all the world of the adjacent villages and hamlets; so that the road to Feldbach on one hand, and to Fahring on the other, presented a continued double stream of people coming and going. Many thousands of persons visited the castle; and although curiosity may have prompted many, sincere respect and affection brought the greater number; for though a stranger in the land, she was a true friend, not merely to the poor and needy, but to all who were in difficulty or distress, however caused. During a residence of nearly forty years in that country, a considerable portion of which time was passed in a state of fierce war, foreign invasion, all the misery of repeated conscriptions, and every kind of military violence, from friends as well as foes, she had but too many opportunities of exercising her benevolence and of relieving distresses which she herself was made to share on the grand scale. In those dreadful times the rich and the powerful suffer chiefly from the deprivation of their wonted luxuries or comforts; but the lower orders are often extinguished altogether; and we repeatedly heard of villages, and even whole districts, which were entirely depopulated; first by the effects of the conscription, which swept away all the young and healthy; then by the scarcity of food which followed upon the abstraction of the working hands; and, lastly, by those wide-spreading pestilences which invariably follow the footsteps of famine, especially when urged on by the savage bloodhounds of war.

At sunset of that day, in the pesence of a great multitude of people, Joseph and I, according to promise, plac-

ed the body of our venerable friend in the iron coffin, which, as I have already mentioned, the Countess had prepared many years before. We took care to rest her head on the bundle of her husband's and son's letters, which I have before described, and at her feet we placed, according to her desire, a small box, containing, I suppose, other relics.

When at length it was time to close the lid, I thought Joseph would have expired on the floor of the chapel, as he kissed his mistress's cold hands, and on his knees intermixed his prayers for her soul, with passionate expressions of his own despair. I was at last obliged to take the keys from his hand, and close the padlocks myself.

Nothing could more forcibly prove the extensive authority and influence which the worthy old Countess exercised, although bedridden, and to all appearance helpless, than the stagnant and desolate air which now reigned not only in the castle, but over the whole neighbourhood. We, too, began to miss her, and to become fully sensible of our loss; and all her kindness, to us in particular, recurred with painful force. I do not know how others felt; but for my part, I could not help being sensible that I had never been half kind enough or attentive enough to my aged and generous friend, who never for one moment intermitted her solicitude for my family. I tried in vain to console myself by the reflection, that in all essentials I had undoubtedly contributed to her happiness, or rather her peace of mind and tranquillity in her latter days, by acceding to her earnest entreaty not to be left to die alone. Yet, after the death of our friend, those small neglects of which we are guilty, even towards persons to whom we are most attached —those impatiences of temper—those selfish indulgences, in place of sacrifices to the wishes of the people about us, and a thousand little nameless faults of omission, if not of commission, are apt to rise up before us, and inflict pangs of remorse which ought assuredly to be improved into good and kind words and works towards those who

are still preserved to us, and in whose case such remorse might be a thousand times deeper.

On the 26th of March, when the requisite permission came from the authorities at Gratz, an express was sent off to the clergyman of Riegersburg, to know when the funeral could take place, and to request that the family vault might be opened, and got in readiness accordingly. The answer spread dismay throughout the castle, for every mortal within its walls knew the late Countess's anxiety to be laid by the side of her husband and son. The Pfarrar, or parish priest, wrote back word, that the vault was absolutely full, and that as none of the bodies now placed there could possibly be removed, there was no room for that of the Countess!

This dilemma, it may easily be supposed, was very serious, and it too well justified the poor Countess's fears, that there had been foul play somewhere. It was our duty, however, to think of a remedy; and we sat up half the night in vain consultation as to what was to be done. It was at length decided, on the morning of Friday, that Mr. Thinnfeld, a great friend of the Countess's, and not only an admirable man of business, but a person of talents, good temper, and ingenuity, should set off for Riegersburg to try what could be done amongst the priests, taking with him only the mason of the Hainfeld establishment, a shrewd fellow, who was quite as much interested as we were, in the settlement of an affair of which he had heard his mistress speak fifty times.

We had imagined that the Pfarrar was hostile to the measure we were so anxious about, and our surprise and indignation was great, as the Countess had taken a world of pains to conciliate, not only him as the chief, but all his parishioners, by building an elegant chapel, and erecting a handsome monument in the church, besides procuring an artist from Vienna to execute a picture, of the most gaudy and flaming nature, of their patron saint, which far outshone every other in the church. This worthy, I may mention, is called Saint Florian, and it is to him that all good Catholics pray when a house is on fire.

The metropolitan artist, with a happy mixture of taste and genius, had represented this celestial Higgenbottom seated on the angle of a cloud, which looked as hard and sharp as any block of Portland stone, with a garden watering-pot in hand, extinguishing the flames of a burning village; and the whole being done down (I suppose designedly) to the capacity of the country congregation, was popular accordingly.

Mr. Thinnfeld, therefore, was less surprised than delighted to find that he was received with smiles both by the priest and the people; and all minor difficulties being at once removed, they repaired to the vault, into which, sure enough, there was not room, as the mason observed, to thrust a trowel. After a little reflection and consultation with the mason, it occurred to Mr. Thinnfeld, that although nothing more could possibly be put in, as things stood, there was no reason why as much earth, as equalled in volume the Countess's iron coffin, should not be taken out from below those which were already there. To this the obliging priest readily consented, and every one exclaimed, as on the occasion of Columbus and the egg, "How simple!"

To work went the mason with a select committee of Riegersburgers, and with closed doors, that the public might not be offended with these doings. The coffins were hoisted up one by one, till the vault, which was very narrow, was cleared. A couple of sturdy gravediggers then proceeded to excavate the ground, and before midnight the floor of the vault was lowered about half a yard. The intrusive coffin was then placed at the bottom, while those of the Countess's husband and son were brought to the top, and just room enough left for that of the old lady, in the very situation upon which, as she said, she had long fixed her widowed and broken heart!

On Saturday the funeral took place. The procession was to have started from Hainfeld castle at noon, but owing to the slowness which characterises every thing in Austria, the preparations were not completed, and the whole party under weigh, before one o'clock. The body in its ponderous coffin, and covered with the pall and

scutcheons, which had evidently seen many a similar ceremony, and now hung thread bare to the ground, was placed not in a hearse, but on one of the Countess's own wagons, as they are called—just a good honest four wheeled cart—drawn by four of the farm horses. This unpretending equipage headed the procession. Next followed about two hundred men bareheaded, and one hundred women, the peasantry of the estate, all on foot, and marching four abreast, chanting ave Marias and Pater Nosters alternately, from time to time in chorus. The effect of these simple sounds as the procession passed over the hills, and tracked its way through the wooded ravines, after leaving the flat valley of the Raab, was singularly pleasing. Additional effect was given also by the bells of the different village churches, which were set a-ringing the moment the procession came in sight. And as these hamlets lay pretty close to one another on the road by which we passed, for a distance of nearly a couple of leagues, we seldom ceased to hear one set of bells, before detecting the incipient sounds of another, stealing from the dells and forests before us, in which the villages laid.

Behind the female part of the procession came the carriage in which we sat, followed about a dozen others, filled with the neighbouring friends of the late Countess.

In front of all, as if to lead the way, and just before the body, limped along the lame keeper of the castle-donjon, I suppose in his capacity of grand marshal; and, what made the matter stranger still, he carried a huge lantern in one hand, with a lighted candle in it, and the keys of the prison in the other! As we passed through the villages, all the inhabitants flocked to the roadside to show their respect to the Countess's memory—for she seems to have been equally esteemed at a distance as close to her own castle. Our course lay over a steep and very rugged, though not high range of hills, and, as the road, by necessity, was made to wind round the obstacles, we got many pleasant views of the procession, as it threaded its way amongst the woods.

Besides the regular tenantry of the estate, there fol-

lowed many hundreds of men and women, and swarms of children from all the adjacent villages; so that the whole forest through which we passed seemed alive; and, as these extra attendants upon the procession observed no order of march, but made short cuts over the knolls and across the glens, they gave to the whole somewhat the appearance of a wild hunting party. The day, fortunately, was remarkably fine, and the fresh but calm air of spring breathed health and beauty all around a scene which, however solemn in some respects, had nothing melancholy in it. At all events, it was unlike most funerals, from being unattended by almost any bitter regrets, and widely different from that which had passed over the same ground eighteen years before, when the poor afflicted Countess followed her child to the grave!

On reaching the summit of the ridge, we came full in sight of the noble rock and castle of Riegersburg, for many ages the country seat and the strong-hold of the Purgstall family. As we wound slowly down the northern side of the hills, we began to hear the bells of the parish church at which our solemn march was to end. The whole flank of the rock on which the church stood, was covered with people. About half way up, the worthy Pfarrer, surrounded by his assistant priests, met the body, and a halt being ordered, the followers, who were on foot, were sent in advance, while those who had come in carriages got out and took their station behind the coffin. The clergymen led the way, and though it appeared that a point of church etiquette prevented their appearing in canonicals, they chanted prayers and hymns all the way to the church, while the rest of the persons forming the procession sung the responses. In the programme of the ceremony, it was merely specified, amongst other particulars which I forget, that the Protestant friends of the deceased were not to carry torches or lighted candles in their hands, and that they should not chant any prayers! These were very easy conditions; and indeed we felt nothing but gratitude for the attention, the good taste, the absence of all bigotry and unworthy prejudice;—in short, the generous liberality

of the Roman Catholic population throughout the whole proceeding.

I ought to have mentioned before, that early in the morning, in the chapel at Hainfeld, I had read the funeral-service of the Church of England over the body of our departed friend. Besides ourselves, there was only one old woman in the chapel, who, on my beginning to read, gathered up her rosary in great haste, and made good speed out of the reach of words which, although we hold them to be so very beautiful and impressive, may have sounded heretically to her ears, though spoken in a foreign tongue.

The crowd in and around the church at Riegersburg was so great, that it was not without considerable pushing that we made our way to the little chapel, beneath the floor of which lay the family vault in which the Countess's remains were to be deposited. The sun, which shone brightly into the church, and just reached to this corner, lighted up the whole of that part of the scene in a manner the most animated and even cheerful. Every accessible point, every "coigne of 'vantage" was occupied by the peasantry—even the pulpit was crowded—and the tops of all the altars held clusters of little grinning urchins, in companionship with the winged cherubims and seraphims, in stone, and all mocking, as it were, the grim symbols of death, and of the last offices of mortality going on below them.

Mean while, a grand "Miserere" was sung by a full body of village choristers, in a style as it struck us, of much greater simplicity and beauty, and certainly of more earnest solemnity, than any of those pompous "falsettos" we had heard a year before in St. Peter's at Rome, in the presence of the Pope and all his cardinals.

There occurred some difficulty in lowering the heavy iron coffin into the vault, or rather in placing it in the right situation. In consequence of the smallness of the opening, it was necessary that one end of the coffin should be lowered down by means of ropes before the other, in order that, after its reaching a certain depth, it might be received by the people below, and by them be guided into its right berth. So far, all went right; but when the coffin was pushed on one side, and had partially en-

tered the place assigned to it, and the persons who stood above were about to let go their hold of the ropes, the men below called out that their strength was unequal to sustain the weight, unless those who held the upper end could preserve their grasp of the rings. This, however, it was soon ascertained could not be done; and as no second set of ropes had been provided, the dilemma was attended with considerable danger to the men at the mouth of the vault, who must have been severely bruised, if not crushed to death, had those above relinquished their hold of the rings.

A pause of some moments occurred, during which, as no one else seemed to know what to do, I ventured to take the command, in order to see whether my nautical resources might not be brought into play in performing the last offices for my venerable friend.

I rushed forward, therefore, and catching hold of one of the ropes which sustained the weight of the coffin, and which was made fast to the lower end, rove it through one of those rings or handles at the upper end, which the people were just about to let go. I pulled the rope smartly through the ring, during which operation the other rope, double manned, supported the whole weight. As we had now a rope at each end of the coffin, it was easily and gently lowered into its final resting place.

Thus, as it happened, literally as well as figuratively, I complied with the good Countess's entreaty, that I "would not desert her at the last, but remain by her to close her eyes, and lay her poor old shattered head in the grave!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE COUNTESS AND WALTER SCOTT.

I HAVE mentioned more than once in the course of this narrative, that some of the most interesting parts of the Countess' conversation related to the period when she

and Sir Walter Scott were both young; and when, although she was considerably his senior, they were great friends and companions. At the time I speak of, towards the close of the last century, he was received in the most friendly terms by the family of the celebrated Dugald Stewart, of which the Countess, then Miss Cranstoun, and elder sister of Mrs. Stewart, was a member.

This intimacy led Sir Walter, very early in life, to consult Miss Cranstoun about his literary productions, respecting which, it appears that he, with the usual diffidence of genius and powers unexercised, felt extremely distrustful. Fortunately he met not only with sympathy and encouragement, but with solid counsel, from a congenial mind, whose sagacity penetrated much sooner than the rest of the world through the modest veil which concealed those talents destined so soon to command universal attention.

There was nothing, however, of a more tender sentiment between them; and while her interest in him arose entirely from an early appreciation of his great capacity, and the unrivalled sweetness of his disposition, his thoughts and his feelings were pointed, with her entire approbation, in quite another direction.

Unfortunately, the lady to whom he was attached discouraged his suit, or, at all events, her family did; and in his distress he naturally made Miss Cranstoun his confidant, and he found in her both sympathy and assistance. Her co-operation on this occasion, it is true, led eventually to nothing, so far as the immediate object aimed at was concerned; but it furnished, accidentally, an interesting, and perhaps an important incident in the literary history of the humble youth, who, while his generous friend shortly afterwards banished herself, and was lost sight of, speedily rose to be the legitimate monarch of modern literature.

About the year 1793, Burger's extraordinary poem of Leonora found its way to Scotland, and it happened that a translation of it was read at Dugald Stewart's, I think by Mrs. Barbauld. Miss Cranstoun described this strange work to her friend; the young poet, whose imagination was set on fire by the strange crowd of wild images and

novel situations in this singular production, never rested till, by the help of a grammar and dictionary, he contrived to study it in the original, and she, as usual, encouraged him to persevere, and at the end of a few weeks' application to the German language, he had made out the sense, and had himself written a poetical translation of that poem.

One morning, at half-past six, Miss Cranstoun was roused by her maid, who said Mr. Scott was in the dining-room, and wished to speak with her immediately. She dressed in a great hurry, and hastened down stairs, wondering what he could have to say to her at that early hour. He met her at the door, and holding up his manuscript, eagerly begged her to listen to his poem! Of course she gave it all attention, and having duly praised it, she sent him away quite happy, after begging permission to retain the poem for a day or two, in order to look it over more carefully. He said she might keep it till he returned from the country, where he was about to proceed on a visit, to the house where the lady to whom he was attached was residing.

His friendly critic was already aware of this intended visit, and an idea having suggested itself to her during his animated perusal of the poem, she lost no time in putting it in execution. As soon as he was gone, she sent for their common friend, Mr. William Erskine, afterwards Lord Kinneder, and confided her scheme to him, of which he fully approved. The confederates then sallied forth to put their plan in train, and having repaired to Mr. Robert Miller the bookseller, they soon arranged with him to print a few copies of the new translation of "Lenore," one of which was to be thrown off on the finest paper, and bound in the most elegant style.

In a few days the book was ready, and care being taken to despatch it, addressed to Mr. Scott, so that it should arrive at what was deemed the most propitious moment, it was placed in the Poet's hands, just as the company were assembled round the tea-table after dinner.

Much curiosity was expressed by the party—the fair lady inclusive—as the splendid little volume gradually escaped from its folds, and displayed itself to the aston-

ished eyes of the author who, for the first time, saw himself in print—and who, all unconscious of the glories which awaited him, had possibly never dreamed of appearing in such a dress.

Concealment was out of the question, and he was called upon by the unanimous acclamation of the party, to read the poem, of which, as it happened, none of them had ever heard even the name.

Those who have enjoyed the surpassing delight of hearing Sir Walter Scott read poetry, will easily understand the effect which this recitation of his own earliest printed work, under the excitement of such a moment, must have produced. Indeed, the only matter of astonishment is, how any simple maiden's heart could have resisted this first wave of the great magician's wand—destined so soon to enchant all mankind!

But so it was; and the only lasting effect of this little plot was to increase the intimacy between the young author and his friendly critic. It may easily be supposed that she was now called upon more frequently than ever to pronounce her judgment upon a vast variety of productions, drawn from that boundless storehouse of poetical conceptions, which even then was overflowing.

The Countess's anecdotes relating to this period were without number; and I bitterly regretted, when it was too late, that I had not commenced at once, making memoranda of what she told us. It was indeed quite clear to us, that this accomplished and highly gifted lady, was the first person who not merely encouraged him to persevere, but actually directed and chastised those incipient efforts which, when duly matured, and rendered confident by independent exercise, and repeated, though cautious trials, burst forth at last from all control, and gave undisputed law to the whole world of letters.

That I am not singular in this opinion, as to the important share which the Countess Purgstall took in the formation of Sir Walter Scott's character, I am happy to have it in my power to establish, on the best possible authority—I mean that of Mr. Lockhart, whose biography of his great father-in-law the public are looking for with so much well-grounded eagerness.

The following is an extract from a letter which I received from that gentleman during the winter I spent at the Countess's Castle of Hainfeld:—

"If, when you read this, you be still in the Chateau of Sir Walter's old and dear friend the Countess Purgstall, pray ask her whether she can give me copies of letters from Sir Walter at the period of their intimacy. *He* had carefully preserved, nay, bound up hers; and if I had the other part of the correspondence, many points now dark would be cleared up. It is obvious that Miss Cranstoun had much influence on the formation of his tastes and manners, and that she was, in short, *the* woman who first took him in hand, and did for him the sort of thing, which, until some fair hand does for us, we are all bears!

"I should delight in her reminiscences of the suppers in Frederic Street, that I have so often heard him speak of.

"Finally, pray ask the Grafinn whether she ever received a long and beautiful letter from Sir Walter, acknowledging the receipt of a book which was, I conclude, the same I once saw elsewhere, viz. her Denkmahl.* I lately found such a letter unsigned and unaddressed, but charming. I think it possible that he had forgotten it, and that the document now before me is therefore her Ladyship's. If so, I shall have the pleasure of forwarding it as soon as I am informed of the fact."

The poor Countess was much agitated when I read her this letter; she had not received any answer from Sir Walter Scott to the communication she sent along with her melancholy book, the Denkmahl alluded to—and she had felt the keenest disappointment at his fancied neglect of her at a moment when she was almost overwhelmed by domestic sorrow, and when such a letter as he alone could write would have proved—if any thing on earth could—a consolation to her broken heart.

She was in a corresponding degree delighted, therefore, and she expressed herself beyond measure happy to

* This is a work in German which the Countess had published, giving an account of her husband and son. *Denkmahl* means monument.

hear that her earliest friend, in whom she had so entirely trusted, had not indeed deserted her. She made me write instantly to Mr. Lockhart, to beg that this precious paper which Sir Walter had written, but mislaid, should be immediately despatched to her.

It must ever be a source of regret, that the excellent old lady did not live to read the letter in question, though it was forwarded by Mr. Lockhart, as desired. This beautiful and feeling composition, every word of which would have enchanted her, poor woman, never reached her hands. It was probably tampered with by some of the post-offices, through which it had to thread its way, across the Continent, to the remote corner of Lower Styria, in which the person for whom it was composed had banished herself.

With respect to the other letters of Sir Walter Scott, she had a melancholy account to give. She and her late husband, the Count Purgstall, had for many years busied themselves in collecting the original letters of the most eminent authors in Germany, with most of whom, indeed, they were in habits of familiar correspondence. These letters were carefully arranged, and placed apart in a secret drawer of a cabinet in the old library, and were considered in perfect security. At the disastrous period of the poor Countess's history, when her son died, and the estates were laid claim to by a whole host of claimants as heirs-at-law, the property, including the house and all it contained, were put, as usual in Austria, under the charge of the courts of law at Gratz, until the rightful owner could establish his claim. This wise and salutary regulation is generally attended with the best effects, in securing the eventual course of justice, and preserving the property uninjured, in cases of disputed succession. And had the Countess only placed the letters in question in the hands of the Commissioners appointed to take an account of the property, they would no doubt have all been preserved. But, in the agitation and grief of that dreadful period, when she was threatened with absolute ruin—and when every thing on earth that was dear to her had been removed from her—and when she was overwhelmed with technical business, she entirely

forgot these precious documents, along with which were all Sir Walter Scott's letters. Nor did she ever think of them, till long afterwards, when the irritating law-suits by which she was harassed were at an end, and she was allowed to sit down in peace—or in such peace as the world could then supply to her bruised spirit—on the small remnant of the immense family estates of the recently obliterated family of the Purgstalls. Having occasion to refer to a letter from the great Schiller to her husband —she applied her master-key to the secret drawer, and lo! it was empty! All the papers it contained had been stolen, including every scrap of Sir Walter Scott's writing.

This provoking circumstance, which left her without one line under the hand of her old friend, made her even more anxious than she would otherwise have been, to possess the precious letter he had written her, and which had been found amongst his papers after his death. Not long before she expired, she expressed a hope that it might still arrive in time to meet her eyes before they were closed for ever. But it came not—and it is now, I fear, irrecoverably lost. Fortunately Mr. Lockhart took the precaution to make a copy before he trusted such a paper to the dangerous handling of the continental post-offices; and I have obtained my generous friend's permission to make use of this letter in illustration of the character of the late Countess. Its perusal will, I am sure, fully bear out all I have said in her favour—for it is not in such terms of confidence that Sir Walter would have written, under any feeling short of the well-grounded friendship of a whole life.

Before giving this beautiful and interesting letter, however, it may not be out of place to mention a curious fact in the history of the Countess, his early friend, which, I think, we established completely. From the accounts which she gave of her own independence of character and conduct, and the peculiarity of her ways, especially of her being always on horseback, and always speaking her mind—with other points bordering on eccentricity, which she said she could well afford to laugh at in her old age, we very early conceived the idea that she might

possibly have been the person from whom Sir Walter drew his bold and truly original character of Die Vernon; and when our suspicions were once aroused, we found confirmations at every turn. Amongst other things, it seemed very odd and unaccountable, that of all the works of Sir Walter Scott, the only one which she had not seen was Rob Roy; and upon questioning her as to the cause of this, she mentioned *that it was the only one which he had not sent her*. Now, on the supposition that the heroine was drawn from her, this is readily to be understood—but scarcely otherwise.

Of course, we lost no time in bringing this novel before her, and while we read it to her, we carefully watched the effects it produced. She was much more deeply interested with the story than she had been with that of any of the other novels. She took particular interest in the descriptions of the scenery; and with all that part which lies in Cumberland she seemed perfectly familiar; and as we read on, she repeatedly exclaimed—"Oh, I know that scene—I remember describing it myself to Sir Walter Scott. That anecdote he had from me—I know the man that character is taken from," and so on, through the greater part of the book. But, what was most remarkable, she never once made an observation on the character or proceedings of Die Vernon. So completely, indeed, were we persuaded, from all the circumstances, that she herself was conscious of the likeness, that we felt afraid to take the liberty of speaking to her directly upon the subject. Many times, however, we dropped hints, and gave her openings, but though she was quite communicative on every other point, she was resolutely silent upon this. And what made her reserve the more remarkable was, that when any other of Sir Walter's novels was read to her, she let not a single character pass without the minutest scrutiny—and very often stopped us to relate other characteristic anecdotes of the persons mentioned, and which she said she knew belonged to the same parties from which he had made his sketches.

For the rest, I shall only add, that I cannot conceive anv thing more exactly like what we suppose Die Ver-

non to have become in her old age, than was our excellent friend Madame Purgstall at seventy-eight. Nearly forty years of expatriation, during scenes of war, pestilence, and famine, with the accompaniment of military despotism and civil tyranny, had in no material degree damped the generous spirit, or tarnished the masculine understanding, which early won the future Great Unknown's confidence and regard; and which, in the meridian of his power and fame, he afterwards traced in one of his most original and striking characters.

The letter which Sir Walter Scott wrote to the Countess is as follows, and I think it will be admitted, that a more enviable Denkmahl, or monument, can hardly be conceived, than is contained in these simple lines, the offspring of a friendship, from which nearly half a century of separation had taken none of its original warmth:—

"1820.

"*My Dear and much valued Friend,*

"You cannot imagine how much I was interested and affected by receiving your token of your kind recollection, after the interval of so many years. Your brother Henry breakfasted with me yesterday, and gave me the letter and the book, which served me as a matter of much melancholy reflection for many hours.

"Hardly any thing makes the mind recoil so much upon itself, as the being suddenly and strongly recalled to times long past, and that by the voice of one whom we have so much loved and respected. Do not think I have ever forgotten you, or the many happy days I passed in Frederick Street, in society which fate has separated so far, and for so many years.

"The little volume was particularly acceptable to me, as it acquainted me with many circumstances, of which distance and imperfect communication had left me either entirely ignorant, or had transmitted only inaccurate information.

"Alas! my dear friend, what can the utmost efforts of friendship offer you, beyond the sympathy which, however sincere, must sound like an empty compliment in the ear of affliction. God knows with what willing-

ness I would undertake any thing which might afford you the melancholy consolation of knowing how much your old and early friend interests himself in the sad event which has so deeply wounded your peace of mind. The verses, therefore, which conclude this letter, must not be weighed according to their intrinsic value, for the more inadequate they are to express the feelings they would fain convey, the more they show the author's anxious wish to do what may be grateful to you.

"In truth, I have long given up poetry. I have had my day with the public; and being no great believer in poetical immortality, I was very well pleased to rise a winner, without continuing the game, till I was beggared of any credit I had acquired. Besides, I felt the prudence of giving way before the more forcible and powerful genius of Byron. If I were either greedy, or jealous of poetical fame—and both are strangers to my nature—I might comfort myself with the thought, that I would hesitate to strip myself to the contest so fearlessly as Byron does; or to command the wonder and terror of the public, by exhibiting, in my own person, the sublime attitude of the dying gladiator. But with the old frankness of twenty years since, I will fairly own, that this same delicacy of mine may arise more from conscious want of vigour and inferiority, than from a delicate dislike to the nature of the conflict. At any rate, there is a time for every thing, and without swearing oaths to it, I think my time for poetry has gone by.

"My health suffered horridly last year, I think from over labour and excitation; and though it is now apparently restored to its usual tone, yet during the long and painful disorder (spasms in the stomach), and the frightful process of cure, by a prolonged use of calomel, I learned that my frame was made of flesh, and not of iron, a conviction which I will long keep in remembrance, and avoid any occupation so laborious and agitating, as poetry must be, to be worth any thing.

"In this humour, I often think of passing a few weeks on the continent—a summer vacation if I can—and of course my attraction to Gratz would be very strong. I fear this is the only chance of our meeting in this world,

we, who once saw each other daily! For I understand from George and Henry, that there is little chance of your coming here. And when I look around me, and consider how many changes you will see in feature, form, and fashion, amongst all you knew and loved; and how much, no sudden squall, or violent tempest, but the slow and gradual progress of life's long voyage, has severed all the gallant fellowships whom you left spreading their sails to the morning breeze, I really am not sure that you would have much pleasure.

"The gay and wild romance of life is over with all of us. The real, dull and stern history of humanity has made a far greater progress over our heads; and age, dark and unlovely, has laid his crutch over the stoutest fellow's shoulders. One thing your old society may boast, that they have all run their course with honour, and almost all with distinction; and the brother suppers of Frederick Street have certainly made a very considerable figure in the world, as was to be expected, from her talents under whose auspices they were assembled.

"One of the most pleasant sights which you would see in Scotland, as it now stands, would be your brother George in possession of the most beautiful and romantic place in Clydesdale—Corehouse. I have promised often to go out with him, and assist him with my deep experience as a planter and landscape gardener. I promise you my oaks will outlast my laurels; and I pique myself more upon my compositions for manure than on any other compositions whatsoever to which I was ever accessary. But so much does business of one sort or other engage us both, that we never have been able to fix a time which suited us both; and with the utmost wish to make out the party, perhaps we never may.

"This is a melancholy letter, but it is chiefly so from the sad tone of yours—who have had such real disasters to lament—while mine is only the humorous sadness, which a retrospect on human life is sure to produce on the most prosperous. For my own course of life, I have only to be ashamed of its prosperity, and afraid of its termination; for I have little reason, arguing on the doctrine of chances, to hope that the same good fortune will

attend me forever. I have had an affectionate and promising family, many friends, few unfriends, and I think, no enemies—and more of fame and fortune than mere literature ever procured for a man before.

"I dwell among my own people, and have many whose happiness is dependent on me, and which I study to the best of my power. I trust my temper, which you know is by nature good and easy, has not been spoiled by flattery or prosperity; and therefore I have escaped entirely that irritability of disposition which I think is planted, like the slave in the poet's chariot, to prevent his enjoying his triumph.

"Should things, therefore, change with me—and in these times, or indeed in any times, such change is to be apprehended—I trust I shall be able to surrender these adventitious advantages, as I would my upper dress, as something extremely comfortable, but which I can make shift to do without."

The verses above alluded to by Sir Walter, are no where to be found, and as they appear never to have been written, it was probably owing to this circumstance that the letter was not immediately despatched to his friend the Countess. He may have kept the sheet open in readiness for a moment of inspiration—which moment never arrived—and in the mean time, both the letter itself, and the projected verses, may have altogether escaped his memory.

Nor is this extraordinary, when we consider the vast crowd of occupations which were then gathering fast round him, and insensibly preparing that formidable catastrophe which ere long totally overwhelmed his fortunes.

That great and good man—for he was not less good than he was great—seems indeed to have prepared himself for the possibility of such a reverse, by contemplating the contingency with a consciousness of moral fortitude, which it is pleasing and very instructive to know, never for one instant forsook him when the season of adversity arrived.

THE END.