

monial choice," replied the Countess, with a slightly heightened colour, and dropped the conversation.

Mrs. Bunyon and Lady Arabella exchanged glances, and a covert smile. Moving on presently with the stream, they passed out of Lady Castletowers' hearing, and returned to the subject.

"Their united fortunes," pursued Lady Arabella, "would amount to five millions, if not more. Only conceive it—FIVE MILLIONS!"

"You will meet with no sympathy from Lady Castletowers," said the Bishop's wife, significantly.

"Evidently not. Though, if there were really a coronet in prospect—"

"I think there is a coronet in prospect," said Mrs. Bunyon.

Lady Arabella shook her head.

"No more than there is a crown matrimonial," said she. "I am a close observer of young people, and I know quite well what direction the Earl's inclinations take."

"Indeed!"

"He is over head and ears in love with Mademoiselle Colonna," said Lady Arabella, confidentially. "And he has been for years."

"Does Lady Castletowers know it?"

"I think not."

"And do you suppose they are secretly engaged?"

"Oh dear no! Mademoiselle Colonna, I believe, discourages his attentions—greatly to her credit."

"It is a marriage that would be highly distasteful to Lady Castletowers," observed Mrs. Bunyon.

"It would break her heart," said Lady Arabella.

"She is ambitious."

"—and poor. Poor as a mouse."

If Lady Castletowers had not been a Countess, a Holme-Pierrepont, and the daughter of an Earl, Lady Arabella Walkingshaw could scarcely have forgiven her this fact. She was one of that large majority who regard poverty as a crime.

In the mean while, Miss Hatherton had found that Saxon could not only dance, but, when the first shyness of introduction had worn off, could actually talk. So she set herself to draw him out, and his naïveté amused her excessively.

"I don't mean to let you hand me to a seat, and get rid of me, Mr. Trefalden," she said, when the quadrille was over, and the dancers were promading up and down the hall. "You must sit down in this quiet little nook, and talk to me. I want you to tell me ever so much more about Switzerland."

"I am glad to find any one who cares to hear about it," said Saxon. "It is a subject of which I am never weary."

"I dare say not. I only wonder how you can endure this life of tinsel and glitter after the liberty of the mountains. Are you not disgusted with the insincere smiles and polite falsehoods of society?"

Saxon looked at her with dismay.

"What do you mean?" he said. "The world has been very kind to me. I never dreamt that its smiles were false, or its kindness insincere."

Miss Hatherton laughed.

"You'll find it out," she said, "when you've lived in it a little longer."

"I hope not. I should be very unhappy if I thought so."

"Well, then, don't think so. Enjoy your illusions as long as you can. I have outlived mine long ago; and I'm sorry for it. But let us talk of something pleasanter—of Switzerland. Have you ever hunted the chamois?"

"Hundreds of times."

"How charming! I high up, I suppose, among the snows?"

"Among the snows, along the edges of precipices, across the glacie—wherever the chamois could spring, or the foot of the hunter follow," replied Saxon, with enthusiasm.

"That's really dangerous sport, is it not?" asked the heiress.

"It is less dangerous to the practiced mountaineer than to one who is new to the work.

But there can be no real sport without danger."

"Why so?"

"Because sport without danger is mere slaughter. The risks ought never to be all on the side of a helpless beast."

"That is just and generous," said Miss Hatherton, warmly.

Saxon blushed, and looked uncomfortable.

"I have not only been over a glacier, but down a crevasse, after a chamois, many a time," said he, hurriedly. "I shot one this very spring, as he stood upon an ice-ridge, between two chasms. I ought not to have done it. I ought to have waited till he got to a more open spot; but, having him well within range, I brought him down. When I reached the spot, however, there was my chamois wedged half way down a deep, blue, cruel-looking crevasse—and I had no alternative but to get him out, or leave him."

"So you cut steps in the ice, as ones sees in the pictures in the Alpine-club books?"

"No—I simply tied the cord that every mountaineer carries, round the stock of my rifle—fixed the gun firmly across the mouth of the chasm—and let myself down. Then I tied another cord round my chamois, and when I had reached the top again, I drew him up after me. Nothing is easier. A child can do it, if he is used to the ice, and is not afraid. In all glacier work, it is only the rash and timid who are in danger."

"And what other sport do you get?" asked Miss Hatherton. "Are there any eagles about the mountains of the Grisons?"

"Not so many as there used to be. I have not shot more than five or six within these last three years: but I robbed many an eagle's nest when I was a boy. Then, you know, we have the steinbok, and in winter, the wolf; and sometimes we get the chance of a brown bear."

"Have you ever shot a bear, Mr. Trefalden?" said Miss Hatherton, intensely interested.

"I have shot two," replied Saxon, with a flush of boyish pride, "and made sledge rugs of their skins. You have never been in Switzerland?"

"Oh yes I have," replied Miss Hatherton, "but only in the beaten tracks, and under the custody of a courier, like a maniac with a keeper."

"Ah, you really know nothing of the country," said Saxon, "nor of the people. The Switzerland that the Swiss loves is that wild, free, upper region where there are neither roads nor hotels, tourists nor guides; but only dark pine forests and open plateaus, the haunt of the marmot, the patarmigan, and the chamois."

"I never saw but one chamois, said Miss Hatherton, "and that was a poor fat melancholy creature in a cage."

"Of course you never visited Switzerland in winter?"

"Oh dear no."

"And yet that is the most glorious time of all, when the plateaus are all sheeted with snow, and the great peaks rise above them like marble obelisks, and even the pines stand out white against the deep blue sky. It is like a world awaiting the creation of colour."

"What an enthusiast you are," laughed Miss Hatherton.

"I love my country," replied Saxon.

"You need not tell me that. But what can you do in winter, snowed up in those wild valleys?"

"We are not snowed up. We have sledges; and the deeper the snow lies on the roads and passes, the better our sledges fly along. You should see the Rheinthal between Chur and Thusis, on a bright day in the depth of winter, when the sledges flash along in the sunshine, and the air is full of the music of the bells."

"How delightful!"

"Indeed it is delightful. Then we also skate, practise with the rifle, carve wooden toys, and attend to the winter work of our farms; and sometimes, if there is a wolf or a wild boar about the neighbourhood, we have a great hunt by torchlight. Winter is the time for Switzerland! Ask any Swiss who is not a townsman, and he will tell you the same story."

"I suppose you mean to go back there some day?" said Miss Hatherton.

"Go back!" echoed Saxon. "Why, of course I do. It is my own country—my home!"

"Then if I were to come some Christmas to Chur, would you be very kind to me, and show me some of these winter sports?"

"That I would!" exclaimed Saxon. "And I would buy the loveliest Canadian sledge for you that money could purchase; and you should see a boar hunt by torchlight; and a Schützen Fest; and a wrestling-match; and I would find you a young marmot for a pet. Above all, you would know my dearest father, and if you loved Switzerland for no other reason, you would love it for his sake."

"Your father?" said Miss Hatherton. "I had no idea your father was living."

"He is really my uncle," replied the young man; "but my father by adoption. He is a Lutheran pastor—a miracle of erudition; but as simple as a child, and as pious as an apostle."

"I hear you are terribly learned yourself, Mr. Trefalden," said Miss Hatherton, rising abruptly. "But what is this they are going to do—a waltz? Do you waltz?"

"Try me," replied Saxon, merrily. "It is our national dance—the only dance I ever knew, till I learned these hideous quadrilles a few weeks ago."

In another moment he had encircled the heiress's waist with his arm, and was flying round the hall with her in those smooth, swift circles which no dancers, however good, can execute like the Germans and Swiss. Miss Hatherton was delighted, for she valued a good partner above all things, and Saxon was the best waltzer in the room.

She would willingly have danced and talked with him all the rest of the evening; for Miss Hatherton liked to be amused, and cared very little for the remarks of lookers-on; while Saxon, pleased with her blunt cordiality, would with equal readiness have gone on waltzing, and praising a Swiss life, till it was time to hand her to her carriage. But this was not to be. Lady Castletowers, who, in her quality of hostess, always knew what her guests were doing, was by no means disposed to permit any such proceeding; so she dispatched her son to dance with the heiress, and, having sent for Saxon, herself handed him over to Miss Colonna for the next quadrille.

By this time the arrivals were over, and the departures had begun; and after supper was served, the rooms cleared rapidly. By two o'clock, all were gone, save those guests who remained for the night, and of these there were about a dozen.

Then Viscount and Lady Escher, who had brought valet and maid in their suit, retired to the stately apartments prepared for their reception; and the young men all went down to the Earl's smoking-room; and the Colonnas, instead of going to bed like the rest of the guests, repaired to the little study in the turret. They had much to talk over. Mr. Thompson, the liberal member, had brought them information of Garibaldi, and a packet of letters from friends in London and Turin; Miss Hatherton and Mr. Walkingshaw had promised contributions to the fund; and Mrs. Bunyon had undertaken to distribute some addresses, and fill up a card, among her friends. With the Eschers and Lord Boxhill there was, of course, nothing to be done. Like Lady Castletowers, they looked upon liberty as a vulgar institution, and upon patriots in general as doubtful characters.

The letters read, and such entries made as were necessary, the father and daughter rose to say good night.

"You have done nothing yet, Olympia," said the Italian. "Here is the fourth day already gone."

"I know it."

"I have talked with him once or twice about our country's cause, and he listens willingly; but I have purposely abstained from doing more. The work is yours—why do you delay it?"

"I will not delay it longer," said Olympia, impatiently; "I will begin it to-day."

"He is so rich," said Colonna, "and Italy so poor; and every letter we receive is a prayer for help!"