

Monarch, in the most flattering manner. I had been three days in the city, without having found a moment in which I could visit Augustina although I had intended it. One morning I received the following note:

"My dearest Mr. President,—Must your old friend learn first from the papers that you are here? Under fear of my displeasure, I command you to come this evening and sup with me, in company with some good friends. Do not fail.
Yours attached, A. von WINTER."

Natural enough! who would fail? But yet the tone in which she asked me, did not exactly please me. I had imagined her first address very differently, for there had come over me a peculiar anxiety and fear when I, on the previous days had thought, "I must go and see her." The separation for so many years, the various succeeding events in this interval of time, the old passion, and since then the changes between us two; these ideas all filled me with peculiar, and I may say, contradictory emotions, which made me dread the first meeting with my former love.

With a violent heart-beating I entered the coach, and alighted before the old Waldern house, now the house of Winter. Over the door I saw the coat of arms of a nobleman cut in the stone. Within, everything was new and elegant, so much so that I hardly knew myself there; but two quick-footed servants in pale green and gold livery, conducted me in the right direction, up the broad staircase, and into a spacious saloon filled with company.

The lady of the house, the gracious lady, received me, standing at the entrance of the apartment. It was Augustina,—yes, it was she; and yet it was not exactly herself. Certainly not the fresh beauty of a girl of nineteen; but yet she was charming as a woman of thirty, full, majestic, easy. I could scarcely stammer out a word or two, I was so surprised, so bewildered. Her eyes, too, her blushes, told me of her quickened emotions. But she was so entirely her own mistress, so self-possessed, that she saluted me in the most agreeable manner possible, drew me from my embarrassment, reproved me sportively for having neglected an old acquaintance for so long a time, and taking me by the hand led me to the company, and presented me as a good friend whom she had not seen for ten years.

I soon recovered myself in the confusion of a general sprightly conversation. The lady of the house must do the honors of the house. She was equally kind, pleasant and amiable to all. As she came again for a moment near me, she said.

"How long do we have the pleasure, Mr. President, of keeping you in our city?"

And meeting me afterwards again, "Excellent, my dearest, I tell you once for all, I expect you here every day, and appoint you for the whole time of your stay my *Cavalier servente*."

I now made my request to her to present me to her husband. "Indeed," cried she "I cannot tell you where he is; I believe, however, he is on a party in the country, with the royal master of the hunt. Apropos," added she, "are you married?"

The evening passed away. There was no opportunity for any confidential conversation with Augustina. We danced, we feasted; wit and folly reigned, and pomp and elegance dazzled.

I had, the next day, the happiness of seeing the husband of Augustina. The Counsellor of Justice was a man over fifty, very fine, very polite, nice, but sickly, feeble and meagre in his appearance. "Not so, my brave sir," said Augustina once in passing me. "You look very proud near my dog of a husband, and think to humble my taste a little, but I assure you, on my honor, he is, after all, a very good sort of person."

The tone of the house did not please me, and nothing but the urgency of Augustina that I would be at all her parties, as much as my business would allow me, could have moved me to go there. She did not please me; and yet I found her so amiable, her lively manner, her grace, her wit, drew me there again, often when old recollections and a comparison of the present with the past would have held me back. I even felt she might be dangerous to me, in spite of her levity and her fashionable airs.

"But are you indeed happy, my gracious lady?" said I to her, one evening, when I at last sat alone with her in her box at the opera.

"What do you call happy?" replied she.

I took her hand, pressed it affectionately, and said, "I call that happiness which you once gave my heart. Are you happy?"

"Do you doubt it, Mr. President?"

"Then I am happy, if you speak truly."

"Speak truly? So, my little President, are you still the same old enthusiast. It befits you very well. But do not forget that an opera box is not a confessional. To tell you what you want to hear, we must be by ourselves. Visit me to-morrow morning, at breakfast."

I pressed her hand in gratitude. After the opera, we went together to the house of a friend of Augustina, a lady of the court, to join a supper party.

The next morning I was at her house at eight o'clock. The gracious lady was still asleep. At ten I was admitted. She was in a morning dress,