

method. I wondered to see De Kock manipulate it in finished style, winding yards of it around his fork, and swallowing it duly without any apparent effort. I *cut* mine at that time, although I have learned better now. I recollect the asparagus, too : served by itself on a great flat dish, and shining pale and green through the clear golden sauce that was poured over it. I was just finishing my first luscious, liquid stalk, and indulging in anticipations of my second, when the highest, the shrillest, the most piercing, and most unearthly voice I ever heard, shouted out—

*"And for goodness sake don't say I told you !"*

It was electrifying, at least to me. I dropped my half eaten asparagus stalk and fork at the same time, and looked up to see my companion quietly going on as before. One or two others had stopped eating too, but the majority appeared quite unruffled. I concluded that it was the parrot to which my friend had referred.

"The last comic song," said the imperturbable De Kock.

"But where is the beast !" I inquired. "It seemed to be over my head."

"Oh ! not so near as that. But take my advice and don't call it a beast, although it is a nuisance undoubtedly. Besides, its master is not very far away from your elbow."

"What of that ?" said I, still injured, though in a lower tone.

"What of that ? Ah ! you shall see. Look now ! This short, stout person with the diamond pin and the expansive shirt front is Giuseppe. Ah, he sees me ! Good evening, Giuseppe !"

"Good evening, Monsieur, good evening, good evening ! De friend not like de *parrot*, eh ?"

The man was smiling at me with his hands crossed behind him. An Italian Jew I dubbed him immediately.

"On the contrary, he admires it very much," said De Kock.

Following their eyes presently I saw the cage hanging from the centre of the room, and in it a parrot as nearly pea-green in hue as it is possible for a parrot to be.

"Tell my friend her name, Giuseppe," said De Kock, beginning on some more asparagus.

Giuseppe stood in his patronizing way—quite the *grand seigneur*—with the light falling on his *solitaire*, making it so brilliant that it fascinated and at the same time fatigued my eyes.

"The name of my parrot ? Monsieur De Kock, he know that well. It is *Félicité*—you catch—*Fé-li-ci-té*. It was the name of my wife."