

had given up risks, I should not aspire to serve my country."

"As you will," said Saunders coolly. "The cause is a good one, and I don't suppose you will be discovered."

The strains of the "Blue Danube" died away, the couples broke up, and waltzing gave way temporarily to figure-skating, or repose in the numerous chairs ranged round the banks. Nevertheless, Saunders and Fritz continued their solemn circumnavigation of the Rundsee, thoughtful in mien, voluble in conversation, mechanical in progress.

Phoebe Perowne watched them with ever-waxing indignation. Why was it necessary to look glum when the sun was shining, the frost sparkling, and the wind asleep? Why was it necessary for two men to parade solemnly together round a perfect sheet of ice, when the whole scene spoke of holiday, graceful energy, and social delight?

Anon the band struck up again. A waltz—one of those famous airs that are only evolved from the brains of Polish Jews, interpretations of the purely sensuous, which go lilting and pulsing across Europe from orchestra to orchestra to the enrichment of man's ears and the ravishing of susceptible hearts. Phoebe knew the air, but not too well. It spoke to her in the voice of dreams. It swamped for the moment the practical side of her nature, her political aspirations, her boasted sense of logic. For the moment the suffragist had ceased to be, and the primitive woman was dominant. And the primitive woman longed to express herself as primitive women do when the call of youth shrills high—in the dance. Unfortunately there was no one to dance with. She commenced a petulant "eight," but only completed one half of that prosaic numeral. She saw "Herr Lugnor" and his companion approaching once more, and this time a third man, a handsome young officer in a cherry-coloured uniform joined them. "Hallo, Nolda!" said Fritz.

"What, Fritz in Weidenbruck!" said the newcomer heartily. "When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday morning."

"Yesterday morning!" repeated the officer. "But you were not at the club last night. We had some pretty play at baccara, and the stakes ruled high, I assure you. You must not desert us to-night."

"I have given up cards," said Fritz.

"Hard hit, eh?" said the officer. "Never mind, come and lunch with me in my rooms, and we'll crack a bottle of old Hochheimer."

"I have given up wine."

"The devil! You are joking. You must come, however. Pretty Fraulein Hesta of the Eden Theatre is to be one of the party."

"A thousand thanks, but I have given up pretty frauleins."

The officer made a gesture of despair, laughed a perplexed laugh, and skated off to seek a partner for the ice-waltz.

"You see, I am proof against all temptations," said Fritz to Saunders.

"Nevertheless I have noticed a pair of wonderful eyes following you round—there on your left. That is a temptation I should not like to resist."

Fritz looked, and saw the big, demure eyes of Phoebe Perowne fixed upon him with an air of mystic reproach.

He flushed, raised his cap, and skated on.

"You know her?" Saunders pursued.

"Yes, a countryman of yours," replied Fritz shortly.

"An English visitor without friends. Doubtless she has no partner for the waltz," insinuated Saunders.

"I have given up—"

"Pretty frauleins?" interrupted Saunders. "Yes, but not nice demure ladies of irreproachable antecedents. I did not so read your vow."

"Did not you?" stammered Fritz. "Perhaps not. The girl wants a partner, maybe. If you think—"

"I think you will be an infamous boor if you don't ask her for a dance."

"You are right," said Fritz. "Decency demands. I lunch with you at your rooms in the Neptunburg. Afterwards Herr Neumann's back-premises and a little espionage in the Council Chamber. Auf wiedersehen!" and

smiling his brightest smile, Fritz of Friedrichsheim turned round and skated towards the compelling eyes of Phoebe Perowne.

CHAPTER VII.

A Noble of Grimland.

"MAY I have the pleasure, Miss Perowne?"

"Certainly."

Fritz took Phoebe Perowne's right hand in his own left, and setting his right hand firmly against her back, struck out to the beat of the alluring waltz. Fritz was almost uncomfortably conscious of his partner's beauty. Her delicate perfection, exquisite suppleness, and bewildering fragrance were things that could not help appealing to one who had never neglected the faculty of assimilating sensuous impressions. Their heads, as is correct in waltz-skating, were close together. Their turns were effortless, their gyrations bold, sweeping and rhythmic. A sense of guilt put a fine edge to his joy, for he had sworn to renounce material pleasures till the crisis was overpast, and against all his resolutions he was enthralled in the most delightful occupation in the world. He wished those great grave eyes, with their troubling purity and priestess-like fire, would cease to look at him—wished it with all his heart, till the lids fell and the long lashes veiled the shining source of his disquiet. Then he only lived till they opened again and tormented him. As for Phoebe, she was a being of freshly awakened instincts. The cut-and-dried delights of English society had never stirred her blood to a quicker flow, or tuned her pulses to a brisker measure. Serious in mind as in aspect, she had found vent for her youthful energy in the dust and combat of a political cause. Conquests of a sentimental nature had been too cheap and frequent to afford satisfaction. But the air of Grimland was not as the air of her native country. Something barbaric and primordial went to its chemic admixture. The sway and splendour of the ice-waltz were wine and music to her singing heart. The breath of the keen air, the kiss of the red sun, the frictionless speed of their whirling journey, were component elements of a hitherto untasted ecstasy. She knew that her partner was extraordinarily handsome, that he skated superlatively well, and that the sky above her head was bluer than sky had any right to be.

With her, too, a sense of shame was blended subtly with her transports.

She was skating with a coward, and she not only forgave him his cowardice, but in her heart applauded it. Such gracious manhood must not be exposed to the sword or bullet of the professional bully. He had sinned against the code of man's honour, and his only pleas were youth and comeliness—and there was no need with her for further argument.

The music ceased.

"You skate strongly for—" ("An Englishwoman," he was about to add, but politeness checked him.)

"For what?"

"For so dainty a young lady," he concluded.

"I wish you had not said that."

"Why?" he asked.

"I dislike gallantry."

He noted the flushed warm cheeks, the gleam and fire of the great eyes, which belied her words.

"So you said yesterday," he replied, "and I told you why you disliked it."

"You gave the wrong reason."

"What is the correct reason?" he demanded.

"I have a motto and I make no attempt to it."

"I have a motto and I make no attempt to live up to it," he retorted. "My family motto is a French one: 'Affaire de coeur, affaire d'honneur.' I have Huguenot blood in my veins, but the Grimlander predominates."

"It is a fine motto, which you will appreciate when you have an 'affaire de coeur.'"

"When I have—!" He broke off with a laugh. "But tell me your motto?"

"Mine is written in large letters and nailed over my bed. 'Do zumat. Do good if you can, anyway do zumat.'"

(To be continued.)

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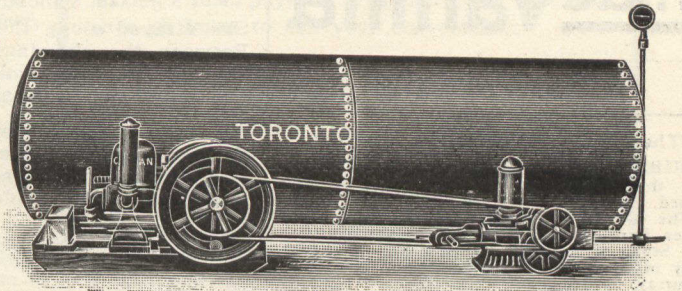
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