

tried to tell him how for five years the girl whose hand he had won had been growing in grace as well as beauty, feeding her mind with holy thoughts, and living in forgetfulness of herself; how it had been an education to me to be with her, to watch her, to learn from her, and to love and cherish her—and then Celia sprang up and interrupted me, and fell upon my neck, crying, and kissing me. Oh! happy day!—oh! day of tears and sunshine! Oh! day, fruitful of blessed memories when for once we could bare our hearts to each other, and show what lay there hidden. No need any more to pretend. I loved her, and I always had loved her. She loved me too, if not in the same way, what matter?

Well, it was all over, Celia was promised to Leonard. And yet it seemed as if it was only all begun. Because, after a little while, Celia turned to me with a cry, as one who remembers something forgotten.

"Laddy, what about Herr Räumer?"

She and I looked at each other in dismay. Leonard laughed.

"There is Perseus," I said pointing to him. "He is strong and brave. He is come to rescue Andromeda. What did I tell you, Celia, the day before he kept his promise?"

She had not forgotten one word about the loathsome monster and the distressful maiden.

"Now it has all come true," I said. "Meantime the first thing is to tell the Captain. And that I shall go and do this minute. You two will come on when you please—when you are tired of each other."

Leaving them behind me hand in hand was like plunging at once into the loneliness which loomed before me when they two should be gone. One had no right to be sad. I had enjoyed the companionship of Celia for five years, all to myself; it could not be expected that I was to have her exclusive society for all my life. Besides, there was Poland—it really was hard to keep one's thoughts in that dark groove of revenge; I constantly forgot my wrongs and my responsibilities. Nor did I even, I fear, thoroughly realize the delights of battle, and the field of patriotic glory.

At the bottom of the slope then came to meet me the very man—old Wassielewski himself. He was radiant.

Without a word of preface, he cried out as he seized me by the hand:

"You are in luck. To-morrow they will call upon you."

"Who?"

"The deputies from Basle, Geneva, London, and Paris. They will call upon you at three, with me. Be at home to meet them."

"And when—Wassielewski?"

"When do we begin? At once; next week we must start. Courage, boy; you go to—avenge the blood of your father. To-morrow—to-morrow—at three."

He waved his arms like the sails of a windmill.

Just then the bands in the Yard, amid a deafening shout, because the ship was launched, struck up a splendid march.

"Listen," he cried. "That is an omen. Hear the music which welcomes the news of another Polish rebellion. A good omen. A good omen."

He sped swiftly away.

But it was a wedding march, and I thought of Leonard Candéal.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE KEY OF THE SAFE.

I was walking along the street after leaving this pair of lovers, full of thought, with my eyes on the ground, when I was aware of a voice calling my name. It was Augustus Brambler tearing along the pavement without a hat, a quill—Augustus would never descend to the meanness of steel pens while in the Legal—still behind one ear, his coat tails flying behind him, enthusiastically anxious to execute an order from the Chief. It was a simple message, asking me to step in and see Mr. Tyrrell. I complied, and turned back.

"And the children?" I asked.

"Better, Mr. Pulaski. The Breakings-out have almost disappeared, thanks to an increase of Affluence. My brother Ferdinand is hard at work on his new series of papers. He calls them 'Reminiscences of the Crimea,' compiled from Captain Copleston's private information combined with the back numbers of the *Illustrated London News*, and the morning's Launch will be new boots all round. I don't think," he added in a whisper, "that the Chief is very well."

Herr Räumer was with him this morning before he went into the Yard, and when he sent for me just now he was pale, and shivered. No one knows what we lawyers go through; no one can guess the wear and tear of brain. Dear me! On Saturday nights I often tell Mrs. Brambler that I feel as if another day would finish me off. But then Sunday comes, when Ferdinand and I can sit over our wine like gentlemen, and rest. Here we are, Mr. Pulaski, sinking his voice to a whisper. "I must return to a most important case. Talk of intricacy! Ah!"

Mr. Tyrrell was leaning against the mantelshelf, looking, as Augustus said, anything but well. The Mayor's robes lay in his arm chair, and round his neck still hung the great gold chain of office. Usually a high-coloured, florid man, with a confident carriage, he was now pale and trembling. His hands trembled; his lips trembled; his shoulders stooped. What was it that had placed him in another man's power?

"Ladislav," he groaned, "I wish I were dead!"

That seems, certainly, the simplest solution of difficulties. I suppose every man, at some crisis in his fortune, has wished the same. At such

times, when it seems as though everything was slipping under one's feet, and the solid foundation of wealth, honour, name, all the fabric of years, was tumbling to pieces like a pack of cards, even the uncertainty of the dread Future seems easier to face than the chances of the Present. Here was a man who had mounted steadily, swiftly, without a single check, up the ladder of Fortune. He had saved money, bought houses, owned lands, possessed the best practice in the town, held municipal distinctions, was the envy of younger men and the admiration of his own contemporaries; and now, from some real or fancied power which this German possessed over him, he was stricken with a mortal terror and sickness of brain.

"I wish I was dead!" he repeated.

"Tell me what has happened, Mr. Tyrrell."

"He has been here again. That is nothing—he always is here. But he came with a special purpose last night. He came to say that he wanted an answer."

"Wants an answer?"

"Celia must give him her decision."

"I am very—very glad, Mr. Tyrrell," I said, "that he did not want it yesterday morning. I will tell you why, presently."

"He is jealous of young Copleston. Says Celia sat up all night with him and you when he came home. Is that true?"

"Quite. We had so much to say that we did not separate till five in the morning."

"To be sure, you were all then children together. Why, you used to play in the garden and on the walls—"

"And so Herr Räumer is jealous?" I asked, interrupting.

"He is mad with jealousy. He accuses her of fostering an attachment—as if I knew anything about attachments—he declares he must have an answer to-morrow morning, and if it is not favourable—"

"My dear old friend and benefactor," I said, "suppose it is not favourable. Can he take away your daughter? Can he rob you of your money? What can he do for you?"

"I dare not tell—even you, Laddy," he replied. "Money? No. He cannot touch my possessions. My daughter? No; he cannot carry her off. But he can do almost as bad. He can—he can—lower me in the eyes of the world; he can proclaim—if he will—a thing that men who do not know the whole truth will judge harshly. And he will disgrace me in the eyes of my daughter."

I was silent, thinking what to say.

Presently I ventured to ask him whether it would not disgrace him more in the eyes of Celia for him to lend his favour to a suit so preposterous.

He groaned in reply.

"You do not know, Laddy," he said, "the trouble I have had to build up a name in this place, where I began as a boy who swept the office, the son of a common labourer. My brothers are labourers still, and content with their position. My sisters are labourers' wives, and content as well. I am the great man of the family. I had much to contend with, want of education, poverty, everything but ability. I am sure I had that because I surmounted all, and became—what I am. Then I married into a good family, and took their level. And the old low levels were forgotten. Why, if all the world were to remind each other aloud that I once swept out an office, it would not matter."

"Of course not, sir. Pray go on."

"It is fifteen years ago, when Herr Räumer first came to the town. He had a plausible tongue, and wheedled himself into the confidence of all whom he cared to know. He wanted to know me. He made me his lawyer—sent round that great seal, where it has been ever since, and used to sit with me in the evening talking affairs. There was nothing in the town too small for him to inquire into; he wanted the secret history of everything, and he got it from me; I violated no confidence of clients, but told him all I knew."

"Did he talk much about the Poles?"

"He was, at first, very inquisitive about the Poles. Said he sympathized with them—I did not, so I had little to tell him. Then came the time when they made the railway outside of the harbour—"

He paused for a moment.

"—that was the fatal time. I yielded to his instigations, and, together, we—never mind what it was, Laddy. It was nothing that could bring me within the power of the Law, but it was an action which, stated in a certain way, would ruin me forever in the town."

Successful men, I think, are apt to over-estimate the opinion which men have formed of them. They know that they are envied for their success, which is real; and they easily persuade themselves that they are admired for their virtues, which are imaginary. I do not believe that the town at large would have cared twopence if Herr Räumer had gone on to the balcony of the old Town Hall, and, after sticking up a glove in the old fashion of the bourgeois when a Town Function was about to begin, such as the opening of the fair, had there in clear and ringing tones denounced the great Mr. Tyrrell of such and such a meanness. They would have lifted their eyebrows, talked to each other for a day, reflected in the morning that he was rich and powerful, and then would have gone on as if nothing had happened. Because I do not think that any man in the place, however unsuccessful, believed in his heart that Mr. Tyrrell was a bit more virtuous than himself. But that the lawyer would not understand.

I think that one of Rochefoucauld's maxims is

omitted in all the editions. It has somehow slipped out. And it is this:—

"Every man believes himself more virtuous than any other man. If the other man is found out, that proves the fact."

I was thinking out this moral problem, and beginning to test its truth by personal application to my own case, when I was roused by the consciousness that Mr. Tyrrell was talking still.

"—Terrible and long labour in building a name as a Christian as well as a lawyer—good opinion of the clergy—"

It was very wonderful, but the theory did seem to fit marvellously well. I really did believe myself quite as good as any of my neighbours—except Celia and the Captain—and better than most: much better than the Reverend John Pontifex.

"Tell me what you think, Laddy."

"I think, sir," I replied, "that I would lay the case before the Captain, and ask his opinion. I know what it will be."

"You think—"

"I know that he will say, 'Laugh at him, tell him to do the worst. Let him tell a miserable old story to all the town, but let Celia follow her own heart.' And another thing, Mr. Tyrrell. Celia's heart is no longer free."

"What? Was he right?"

"Quite right. Herr Räumer is a very clever man, and he seldom makes a mistake. Half an hour ago Celia listened to Leonard Copleston, and they are now engaged."

"It only wanted that," he replied with a groan.

This looked as if things were going to be made cheerful for the lovers.

"Will you see the Captain if he comes to you? Or, better still, will you go yourself, and talk things over with him? It is half-past twelve, and he will be home by this time. And tell him all."

"I must have advice," he murmured. "I feel like a sinking ship. The Captain will stand by me whatever happens. Yes, Laddy—yes: I will go at once—at once—"

He arose, and with trembling hands began to search for his hat.

It was standing on the safe—the closed safe with the name of "Herr Räumer" upon it in fat white letters.

Mr. Tyrrell shook his fist at the door.

"You are always here," he cried, "with your silent menace. If you were open for five minutes, if I had the key in my hands for only half a minute—I should know what answer to give your master."

He left me, and went out into the street, I after him. But he forgot my presence, and went on without me, murmuring as he went in the misery and agitation of his heart.

I suppose it was the pondering over the successful man as over a curious moral problem, and a certain uplifting of heart as I reflected that there was nothing at all for me to be ashamed of, even if I was found out, that laid me more than commonly open to temptation.

At all events it was then that I committed the meanest action in my life—a thing which whenever I meet my accomplice, even after all of three years, makes me blush for shame.

My innocent accomplice was no other than little Forty-four.

As I was passing the Bramblers' house in Castle Street, Mr. Tyrrell being some twenty yards ahead of me, and going straight away to consult with the Captain, I not being wanted at all, I thought I would call upon my friends. No one was at home at all except Forty-four, who was sitting before the open kitchen window sewing and crooning some simple ditty to herself. Her mother was gone a marketing—that was good news. Uncle Ferdinand, who had received an advance upon his series of papers called "Personal Recollections of the War"—everybody remembers what a sensation those articles caused—was gone out with his notebook to attend the Launch. Augustus Brambler was at his post, no doubt engaged on his labyrinthine case. The children were all on the walls where I had left them playing their little game of Feasting. And Forty-four was in charge of the family pot, which was cheerfully boiling on the fire.

She looked up with her bright laugh.

"Come into the kitchen, Mr. Pulaski, if you don't mind. I've something to tell you."

"What is it?" I asked. "Are things looking better?"

"Oh! yes. Thanks to you know who. We had a dreadful time, though. The man the people call Tenderart—do you know him?"

I knew him and his satellite of old.

"He is our landlord, and he came to take the things to make up the rent. There he stood and began to pick out the things to put in a cart. Uncle Ferdinand asked for time, and the man only laughed. Then Uncle Ferdinand banged his head against the wall and said this was the final Crusher, and we all cried. Then papa ran to get an advance from Mr. Tyrrell."

"Did you ask Herr Räumer?"

"Yes; I went up to ask him—and he said, politely, that he never helped anybody on principle. Well, Papa got the advance, but it was stopped out of his salary, and so—you see—we have had very little to eat ever since. But Tenderart was paid, and he went away."

"I see; and now things are better?"

"Yes. Because Uncle Ferdinand has found something to write about. And Papa has got the most beautiful idea for making all our fortunes. See."

She opened a paper which lay upon the table, and showed it to me. It was written in a clerkly hand, partly couched in legal English, and re-

ferred to a scholastic project. So that in this document the threefold genius of Augustus was manifest.

"ROYAL COLLEGIATE ESTABLISHMENT
for the Education of both Sexes,

Conducted by the BROTHERS BRAMBLER.

"The object of this Institution is to impart to the young an education to fit them for the learned Professions, for Commerce, for the Legal, the Scholastic, or the Clerical. Pupils will be received from the age of eight to fifteen. The College will be divided into two divisions, that for the ladies under the management of Mrs. Brambler, a lady highly connected with the Royal Naval Service, and Miss Lucretia Brambler."

"That's n.e.," said Forty-four, ungrammatically.

"I thought you had no name," I said.

"Mr. Ferdinand Brambler, the well-known Author, will undertake the courses of History, Geography, Political Economy, and English Composition. Mr. Augustus Brambler will superintend the classes of Latin, Euclid, Arithmetic, and Calligraphy—"

"My dear, when is the college to be started?"

"Oh! not yet," cried Forty-four. "When we are a little older, and all able to take a part in the Curriculum. Fancy the greatness!"

"Yes. It is almost too much, is it not? Don't set your heart too much on things, Forty-four."

I did not finish the document, and returned it. The poorer Augustus grew, the more brilliant were his schemes. So Hogarth's starving poet sits beneath a plan of the mines of Potosi. "Is Herr Räumer at home?"

"I think he is gone out. Shall I run up to see?"

We went up together. I had nothing to say, and no reason for calling, but I was excited and restless.

He was not in his rooms. The table was littered and strewn with foreign papers, German, French, and Russian. The piano was littered with his songs—those little sentimentalities of student life of which he was never tired. There was the usual strong smell of recent tobacco in the place, and—it caught my eye as I was going away—there lay in an inkstand on the table—a temptation.

It was the Key of the Safe.

I turned twice to go, twice I came back drawn by the irresistible force of that temptation. It riveted my eyes, it made my knees tremble beneath me, it seemed to drag my hand from my side, to force the fingers to close over it, to convey itself, by some secret life of its own, to my pocket, and once there, to urge me on to further action.

"Mr. Pulaski," cried Forty-four, "why are you so red in the face? What is the matter?"

"Hush," I whispered, "stay here for five minutes, Forty-four—if Herr Räumer comes home bustle about and prevent his touching the table. And say nothing—promise to say nothing."

She promised, understanding no word.

I furtively descended the stairs, I crept swiftly, in the shade of the wall, though it was of course broad daylight, looking backwards and forwards, though there were only the usual people in the street, with beating heart and flushed face, towards Mr. Tyrrell's office. The outer door was open, that was usual; I pushed into the hall, and silently turned the handle of the chief's own office. It was not locked—they did not know he was out—there was, of course, no one else in the room. Like some burglar in the dead of night I crept noiselessly over the carpet to open the safe.

It was done.

I was back in the street, the key in my hand, I was back at the Bramblers' house, I was upstairs again, the key was restored to its place. I seized Forty-four by the hand, and hurried her down stairs.

"What is it?" she asked again.

"Remember, Forty-four, you have promised to tell no one. It was the key of Herr Räumer's safe. I borrowed it for five minutes—for Celia Tyrrell's sake."

She promised again—nothing, she said, would make her tell any one. No one should know that I had been in the room: she entered as zealously into the conspiracy as if she was a grown woman married to a St. Petersburg diplomatist, and engaged in throwing dust into the eyes of an English plenipotentiary.

(To be continued.)

NOTICE TO LADIES.

The undersigned begs respectfully to inform the Ladies of the city and country that they will find at his Retail Store, 196 St. Lawrence Main Street, the choicest assortment of Ostrich and Vulture Feathers, of all shades; also, Feathers of all descriptions Repaired with the greatest care. Feathers Dyed as per sample, on shortest delay. Gloves Cleaned and Dyed Black only.

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