

POOR DOCUMENT

THE AMERICAN BARON.

(BY JAMES DE MILE.)

In a short time their eyes were greeted by the appearance of the stranger above the precipice. He waved his hat again. Then he made some gestures, and detached the rope from his person. The drivers understood him as if this had been prearranged. Two of them instantly unharnessed the horse from one of the sleds, while the others pulled up the rope which the stranger had cast off. Then the latter disappeared once more behind the precipice. The ladies watched now in deep suspense; inclining to hope, yet dreading the worst. They saw the drivers fasten the rope to the sled, and let it down the slope. It did not sink much, but slid down quite rapidly. Once or twice it stuck but by jerking it back it was detached, and went on as before. At last it reached the precipice at a point not more than a hundred feet from where the stranger had last appeared.

And now as they sat there, reduced once more to the uttermost extremity of suspense, they saw a light which sent a thrill of rapture through their aching hearts. They saw the stranger come slowly above the precipice, and then stop, and stoop and look back. Then they saw—oh, heaven! who was that? Was not that her hood—and that figure who thus slowly emerged from behind the edge of the precipice which had so long concealed her—Eliel? Was it possible? Not dead—not mangled, but living, moving, and, yes—wonders of wonders—scaling a precipice! Could it be Oh joy! Oh bliss! Oh revulsion from despair! The ladies trembled and shivered, and laughed and sobbed convulsively, and wept in one another's arms by turns.

As far as they could see through the tears that dimmed their eyes, Minnie could not be much injured. She moved quite lightly over the snow, as the stranger led her towards the sled, only sinking once or twice, and then extricating herself even more readily than her companion. At last she reached the sled, and the stranger, taking off the blanket that he had worn under the rope, threw it over her shoulder. Then he signaled to the men above, and they began to pull up the sled. The stranger climbed up after it through the deep snow, walking behind it for some distance. At last he made a despairing gesture to the men, and sank down. The men looked bewildered and stopped pulling.

The stranger started up, and waved his hands impatiently to the men. The drivers began to pull once more at the sled, and the stranger once more sank exhausted in the snow. At this Eliel started up. "That noble soul," she cried, "what generous heart! he is saving Minnie, and sitting down to die in the snow!" She sprang toward the sled, and endeavored to make out something by her gestures she tried to get two of the men to pull at the sled, and the third man to let the fourth man down with a rope to the stranger. The men refused; but at the offer of her purse, which was well filled with gold, they consented. Two of them then pulled at the sled, and number four hoisted the rope about him, and went down which number three held the rope. He went down without difficulty, and reached the stranger. By this time Minnie had been drawn to the top, and was clasped in the arms of her friends.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHILD-ANGEL AND HER WORK.

Mrs. Willoughby was in her room at the hotel in Milan when the door opened, and Minnie came in. She looked around the room, drew a long breath, then looked at the door, and clinging herself upon a sofa, she recalled there in silence for some time, looking at the ceiling. Mrs. Willoughby looked a little surprised at first, but after waiting a few moments for Minnie to say something, resumed her reading which had been interrupted.

"Kitty," said Minnie at last. "What? asked her sister, looking up. "I think you're horrid." "Why, what's the matter?" "Why, because when you see and know that I'm dying to speak to you, you go on reading that wretched book." "Why Minnie, darling, said Mrs. Willoughby, 'how in the world was I to know that you wanted to speak to me?' 'You might have known,' said Minnie, with a point—you saw me look all round, and look the door, and you saw how worried I looked, and I've a great mind not to tell you anything about it." "About—that is," and Mrs. Willoughby put down her book, and regarded her sister with some curiosity.

Willoughby, with some alarm. "Oh! I don't mean that; but I'll tell you what I mean, and here Minnie got up from her reclining position, and allowed her little feet to touch the carpet, while she fastened her great, fond, pleading, piteous eyes upon her sister. "It's the Count, you know," she said. "The Count!" repeated Mrs. Willoughby somewhat dully. "Well?" "Well—don't you know what I mean? Oh, how stupid you are!" "I really cannot imagine." "Well—he—he—he—pro—posed you know." "Proposed! cried the other in a voice of dismay. "Of course that's what I mean." "What puzzles me is, how he could have got the chance. It's more than a week since he saved you, and we all felt deeply grateful to him. But saving a girl's life doesn't give a man any claim over her, and we don't altogether like him; and so we have all tried, in a quiet way, without hurting his feelings, you know, to prevent him from having any acquaintance with you."

"Oh, I know, I know," said Minnie bravely. "He told me all that. He understood that; but he doesn't care, he says, if I only consent. He will forgive you, he says." "Minnie's volubility was suddenly checked by catching her sister's eye fixed on her in new amazement. "Now, you're beginning to be horrid," she cried. "Don't, don't." "Will you have the kindness to tell me," said Mrs. Willoughby, very quietly, "how in the world the Count contrived to tell you all that?" "Several times." "Several times?" "Yes." "Tell me where?" "Why, once at the amphitheatre. You were walking about, and I sat down to rest; and he came and joined me. He left before you came back."

"He must have been following us then." "Yes. And another time in the picture gallery; and yesterday in a shop, and this morning at the Cathedral." "The Cathedral?" "The Cathedral? You know we all went, and I had the kindness to tell you." "And then, you know, he—he—pro—posed." "And what did you say to him?" she asked at length. "Why, what else could I say?" "What else than what?" "I don't see why you should act so like a grand inquisitor, Kitty. You really make me feel quite nervous," said Minnie, who put her little red-tipped fingers to one of her eyes, and attempted a sob which turned out to a failure.

"Oh, I only asked you what you told him, you know." "Well, said Minnie, gravely, 'I told him you know that I was awfully grateful to him and that I would give anything if I could express my gratitude. And then, you know—oh, he speaks such darling broken English—he called me his niece, and tried to make a pretty speech, which was so mixed with Italian that I didn't understand one single word. By the way, Kitty, isn't the old how everybody here speaks a Italian, even the children?' "Yes, very odd; but Minnie, dear, I want to know what you told him." "Why, I told him that I didn't know you know."

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