

It was time for dinner when we reached St. Malo. I had read, with very few pauses, since luncheon, and neither of us had ever looked at the ship behind us; yet I feel sure it had been in his thoughts, and I know it had occupied my mind far more than *The Autocrat at the Breakfast-table*.

What had taken place during my expedition through the town of Cherbourg? My fears took a rather absurd form, yet not an unnatural one perhaps. I dreaded lest my husband, in his interview with the people on board the yacht, had lost his temper and challenged some one to fight. I could only by this wild supposition explain his distress. I thought that possibly he was wondering what would become of me if he fell. I know now that it was excessively stupid to imagine such a possibility. When I came upon deck, after making my toilet, I found my husband standing with his arms folded and his chin upon his breast, looking at the yacht, our enemy, which was stationed so near that I could almost distinguish the features of the men who were moving upon it.

"What is it, darling?" I said, slipping my hand under his hand.

"Ah! You there, Gertie?" he said, turning to me. He took my two hands in his, and held me at a little distance from him, looking at me with great love.

"Have I ever seen you in that dress before?" he asked.

"Yes, two or three times."

"Then it is you who improve, and not your dress, for I never saw you look so pretty before," and he drew me to him, and lifted me off my feet in his embrace. "What should I do without you, my love?" he murmured.

"And what should I do without you?" I echoed.

"Ah," said he, putting me down and moving towards the side of the ship, his arm about my waist, "that is a question! What do you think would become of you without me?"

I detected, or thought I detected, a serious thought under the pleasantry, and at once my imagination flew to that absurd possibility of an impending duel. It seemed to me that he was still calculating upon the chance of being separated from me for ever. I could not move—a tremor seized me—I looked up at him in speechless terror.

"Why, Gertie," he exclaimed, catching me closer with his strong arms, "do you think I had a serious meaning in the question?"

"Tell me you had not, dear," I said. "You sweet soul! Would I let anything on earth part us now that I have made you mine?"

"Tell me that—only tell me that!"

"I will now, if you like."

"You will let nothing tempt you to—to jeopardise your life?"

"Why, what do you mean, you poor fluttering dove?"

"You are not going to fight any one?"

"Now you puzzle me more than ever. What can you be thinking about, Gertie?"

"You—you went to see the linendraper last night, while I was in the town, and I thought perhaps—"

He burst into a loud laugh, and happily there was no need for me to finish my faltering sentence.

"You're right in one respect," he said, when he ceased to laugh. "I did go on board that confounded boat last night; but there was no linendraper to fight—more's the pity perhaps. But how came you to think of such an unlikely thing?"

"It seemed to me that you were thinking to-day what would become of me if—"

"If—?" I could not continue.

He looked at me with wondering gravity. "Good Heaven! Who would suspect you had it in you?" he said, in a low tone that was not addressed to my ear, then, with a changed voice and a lighter air, he added, "Appose your troubled spirit, sweet; I shall not fight, and no power that is shall separate us in this

world." He kissed me passionately again and again, and I clung to him in the utmost happiness that any soul can feel.

I suppose there was no one upon deck or near enough to see us, or he would not have taken me in his arms at first; yet, had all the world been looking on, I should have been unconscious of them, all my faculties being so completely centred upon him I loved.

He led me up and down the deck—I had regained my strength—and, as we walked, he spoke.

"I have been upset, and 'elt uncomfortable a good deal, Gertie, I admit," he said. "Perhaps my depression results from too much happiness, perhaps the state of my digestion makes me morbidly sensitive. Whatever the primal cause may be, the fact is that the confounded yacht over there, following us about in this insane fashion, worries me beyond endurance. The sea makes me asperitious; it has that effect upon many men, you know."

"Then why should we stay on the sea if it causes you to be unhappy?" I asked.

"That's just what I was 'inking of, talking to you about, dear. I thought that perhaps if we went to Paris for a week I might shake off this stupid feeling."

He spoke with embarrassment—not at all in his usual manner, but as if he were ashamed of his own weakness and his yielding to it.

"We will start this very moment?" I said.

"I wish you would raise some objection, Gertie, so that I might play the hero by overcoming my own inclination, or the tyrant by overcoming yours, or any part rather than this of a sneaking coward."

"Oh, Gilbert!"

He regarded me with a strange expression on his face; I could not tell whether he pitied or admired me.

"Tell me," said he, "that you have grown tired of the sea, and that you would be highly delighted to abandon the plan we made for a cruise of six weeks."

He must have read my thoughts, for indeed what he bade me tell him was in my mind. But I feared now to say so, lest he should think me a fool to change so quickly.

"Tell me," he continued harshly, "that you would rather by half dwell in a noisy city than drift along the sunny coast."

"The sweetest place in all the world is where I see you happy," I said.

The harshness was no longer on his face when he spoke again, but only the expression of love unalloyed.

"What a big soul you have, little sweetheart!" he said. "Will you always love me so fully, I wonder?"

I nodded with confidence and joy, and kissed his shoulder, which was near my lips.

We were gay at dinner; he talked about Paris, which seemed to be not at all a murky city from his description, and I became quite eager to see the Champs Elysees and the Boulevards, and the wonderful shops.

"When shall we start?" I asked.

"To-night, if we succeed in shaking off the enemy."

"I had better pack up my things directly after dinner then."

"Oh, no; a valise would betray us! We have to make our escape, you know. What is indispensable you must put on your back, or I will put it in my pocket. The rest can be bought at Paris. By-the-by, have you any strong affection for that dress?"

"No."

"Good! Now look up another that you like better to take with you. I shall want you to change your dress when we get on shore, and let me have that you wear now. That astonishes you, Gertie—eh?" he said, laughing at my perplexity. "Ah, you have yet to see the subtle side of my character!"

"Shall I have to change my hat as well?" I asked.

"Yes. I didn't think of that. If you can find a veil so much the better."

I did as he desired; and he put the dress and hat I had selected into the canvas bag with which Peter used to fetch stores from the shore; then, when I had finished all my preparations for departure, we left the dear old ship in the small boat, Peter rowing us to the land.

It was still light, and, before we reached the shore, I perceived that a small boat had put off from "the enemy." The distance between us was great, yet I fancied that I could see a woman's figure in the boat. Gilbert saw the boat also, and, as we landed, he said—

"Go to the big hotel over there, Gertie; Peter shall accompany you. I will be with you in a little while."

He then walked away to that point which "the enemy's" boat was making for, while I, with an uneasy feeling of apprehension, went, attended by Peter, to the hotel. It was some time before Gilbert arrived. It was no longer light; the lamps were lit in the street.

"Have you changed your dress, Gertie?" he asked.

"Yes; here are the things."

"Good. We shall want them presently."

He thrust his hands into his pockets, went to the window, and looked down into the court-yard of the hotel. He took no notice of me. Suddenly he drew in his head, and said, in a tone of relief—

"Ab, here they are!"

Then he went to the door and held it open. Shortly afterwards Peter came into the room, followed by Hutchins, the man who served on board the *Tub*, and Joe, the cook's boy, both on the broad grin. Peter carried a bundle under his arm.

"Here are the things," said my husband, pointing to my dress; "take them into the next room. Come with me, Gertie."

We went down to the *salle-a-manger*. Gilbert bade the *gargon* bring some Chartreuse and the note. His silence and obvious inquietude frightened me.

"It's nearly all over," he said, in a reassuring tone, as he pressed my hand.

He paid the *gargon*, giving him rather more for himself than the note amounted to; then we went upstairs again. There was a deal of giggling and suppressed laughter audible as we drew near the room; and, on opening the door, I perceived, to my utter amazement, Peter arranging my bonnet on the head of a young woman, and a gentleman with a beard like my husband's helping with his advice; but, as I soon found, the lady was only the cook's boy Joe in my dress, and the gentleman was Hutchins in my husband's jacket, with a false beard—which, as I was told afterwards, they had much difficulty in finding. It was laughable to see Joe take Hutchins's arm and lean towards him, as I suppose he had often seen me do, and the men seemed so to think it was a fine joke. Only Gilbert looked angry and stern.

"Oblige me by remembering that I am here," he said. "Come, Peter, look sharp!"

There was no more tittering after that. Peter stuffed Hutchins's and Joe's jackets into the canvas bag, and, having touched his little black ringlet to us, went downstairs. Two minutes afterwards, Hutchins, with Joe on his arm, followed.

My husband had thrown himself into a chair with his back to the men, and sat in gloomy silence. When they were gone, I went to him and put my hand on his shoulder, and said—

"They are gone—it's all right now, dear!"

"Thank Heaven!" he murmured, drawing me down upon his knee and kissing me.

We waited only a few minutes, then he lifted me, and rose to his feet.

"Come along, Gertie; we'll go and see if the dodge has succeeded. If it has, we'll breathe again, and to-morrow we'll get our escape with the best luncheon we can get in Paris."

At that moment the *gargon* opened the door, and, seeing us, stopped short in bewilderment. Then, with stuttering apologies, he explained that he thought he had seen us leave the hotel five minutes before.

"*Tant mieux*," said Gilbert.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Mr. De Laveleye on English Life.

This gentleman writes thus in the *Pall Mall Gazette*:—"Whence comes it, then that with such imperfect laws the English are a great nation? I have already stated that this is due, I think to their religious principles, which teach them to aim at perfection and to do good each man to his neighbor. Orthodox economy and materialistic sociology tell me that mankind is urged by one motive, and that that motive is self interest. In England I am surrounded on all sides by churches and schools of all denominations, hospitals, asylums, almshouses, and public parks, all testimonies of a universal devotion to abstract ideas, and constructed for the general well-being. I examine the life of the people I meet, and I see that all, from the laboring man to the peer of the realm, devote a great portion of each day to the fulfilment of duties in connection with the different societies or associations of which they are members. This is to be met with to such an extent in no other country, the United States, perhaps, excepted.

I passed two days with a Quaker family at Darlington, and there I remembered that Voltaire's first three letters on England are in praise of the virtue of this sect. They number only 18,000 in all; but who can say how much not only England but humanity in general owes to these apostles of peace, of justice, and equality, these rigid adversaries of slavery and of worldly vanity? How is it that their philanthropy is at once so active and so efficacious? Because as a rule they follow more nearly than others the Gospel teaching.

See, too, all over the country that marvellous institution—the Sunday Schools of every sect, with 5,200,871 children or one in every five of the entire population, and 593,427 teachers. Six hundred thousand persons who willingly give up several hours of their Sunday every week gratuitously for the purpose of instructing poor children! Is not this a proof, if further proof were needed, of the power of religious sentiment in England? If Board schools have been built all over the land, destined in the space of two generations to completely transform the working classes, and if to attain this object the ratepayers have voted 7d. or 8d. in the pound, it is because here Altruism in Christian charity. If a judicial system which delivers over defenceless honest people on the one hand to rogues, and on the other to lawyers, does not end in a general pillage, it is because religious convictions prevent many from enriching themselves by turning the terrible imperfections of the laws to account. Look into the life of the nation and into that of each individual. Nearly all acts of general utility are inspired by the Gospel spirit, even among those who have ceased to believe in Divine Revelation. In England, and more especially in Scotland, there reigns in families so religious an atmosphere, and the habits in this respect are so different to what they are on the Continent, that one would imagine oneself transported to another planet. As, at the same time, both men and women devote more of their time and of their money to objects of general interest and for the general good than here, I think that this second marked difference from us may be attributed to the first. I may, then, safely tell you to reform as soon as possible your bad laws, but to carefully maintain and strengthen your religious principles, for they are the cause of your pre-eminence."

Waggoners' music—Gee! Whoo! Haw! Git up there, darn you!