

age. Never has he seemed to Kate more agreeable than during the ride which she has dreaded. He makes no allusion whatever to the subject of their conversation on the preceding evening, but he exerts himself as he never exerted himself before, to amuse and entertain his companion; and Kate—understanding that the motive for the effort is chiefly consideration for herself—responds to it frankly. In fact, it is impossible to feel anything like embarrassment long in Fenwick's presence. There are some people who, besides being thoroughly easy themselves, possess a faculty of setting others at ease. He is one of these people, and he has never tested the power more fully than on the present occasion.

(To be continued.)

BLANCA.

AN ORIGINAL TALE.

BY NED P. MAH.

"Haben Sie Feuer?"

I heard the words, it is true, but I was at first unconscious, as I leaned, lazily pulling my *La Patrie*, against the fluted iron column of the Bahnhof Collonade—that they were addressed to me. They had been uttered in the same breath with a long sentence addressed to a companion of the speaker, with whom he appeared in animated converse, and it was only when I noted that they proceeded from the mouth of a moustachioed traveller who extended towards me an unlighted cigar and that his comrade was not smoking, that I awoke to the sense of the courtesy demanded of me. A little nervously perhaps for I was startled at the abruptness of the request, I brushed the white ash from my cigar top and proffered it to the stranger. During the process of lighting he continued—with intermittent puff—the conversation with the hungry-looking, little shabby man at his side. "You have then arranged everything, Karl?"—"Dank schön, Herr" and slightly raising his slouched felt hat in acknowledgment he was gone.

The arrival of the two passenger trains at 11 and 4 daily was the only excitement that ever disturbed the placidity of the dull little town of Nichtszubestillen before the hour of six in the evening. After that hour it is true there were certain small excitements, for the initiated who knew where to look for them. There were quiet little card-parties in the back parlor of the Kron Printsen where more money changed hands at Bissette than was "generally known"—there was the Kaiser Theatre, the curtain of which went up at 7 p.m. where the paralytic manager, the dropsical *Frau Directorin* and her sweet little daughter Agatha, together with two Frauleins of a certain age and uncertain moral character aided by a slim man with a falsetto voice and a consumptive cough who played the lover *roles* and a hypochondriacal "komiker" whose face was most decidedly his fortune, and now and then by a bright particular star from the neighboring *Hofstadt*—did their united endeavors to fill the benches and their pockets. There was a case of Harmony called the *Belle-vue Abend Concert Saal* and situated in the midst of the elaborately laid-out nursery-ground and favored promenade of the Nichtszubestillen public which bore, very undeservedly however the same name, the only view to be obtained from the extremely low lying walks of the said gardens being a cursory one of the funnels of the respective locomotives *Hofstadt*, *Kleinstadt* or *Nichtszubestillen* as the case might be, when they puffed and groined and snorted past the high level bridge on their way into and out of the Nichtszubestillen Station.

But at 11 and 4 and especially at the latter hour all of the little world of Nichtszubestillen which had the leisure to spare, and the proportion which had not was a very small one, assembled in its brightest ribbons and laces and its glossiest hats and fiercest moustachios upon the platform of the Nichtszubestillen Bahnhof. There, with the after-noon sun reflecting with an awe-striking glare from his gold rimmed spectacles which rest slanting upon the bridge of his capacious nose surmounting a still more capacious but moustachio-shadowed mouth whence solemn and slow, issue in huge puffs the fumes of a time honored and silver mounted *meerschaum*; with his obese frame clad in copious broadcloth, through the continuation of which his nether extremities protruding a trifle further than the rules of grace require, show a border of grey stocking above his loosely-fitting highboots; then, ever ready with a sly glance, a nod and a chuck of the chin for a pretty *mädchen*, a covert compliment or an equivocal for the handsome *fraulein*, or a broad joke for his male acquaintance, stands the wealthiest man of the little town the *Particulier v. Guldenberg*. Sometimes, not often, though, for with a strange inconsistency, however careless he may be of the feelings of other men's daughters, he evinces a wonderful solicitude for the guardianship of his own child, watching her outgoings and her incomings like a veritable dragon choosing her companions with fatherly judgment, even cleansing his speech when in her presence of all that might offend her maidenly purity. Sometimes then, the plump little *Fraulein Flora*, in the glory of her fair hair, her bright complexion, her blue, soul-full eyes, and her white lustrous, stands brightening like a sun beam the dusty pavement, the smoky walls, and the dull

beer sodden faces that surround her—by her father's side. Yonder collarless, ill-dressed man with a black patch on his neck, yet with an indescribable aristocratic something in his face which demands respect, bowed to by every passer-by, and courteously returning the salute—is Count R—who, it is said, has a dash of royal blood in his veins. Here, clean shaved and rubeund, with a tiny black moustache which unruly wags have ere this denominated a snuff collector fringing his upper lip—portly, leather-stocked and choleric—is Inspector Schultz. Here, in this dapper little man with red moustache and straw hat, we have Cohen, the cigar Fabrikant, smoking a sample of his wares—now, we make way for those two laughter-loving Frauleins who live opposite the Apothek and giggle so absurdly when we pass them. Next, the theatrical damsels, under the escort of the consumptive lover, pass before us—one tall and dark and highly rouged affecting an air of tragedy queen; the other short and plump and with that peculiarly amiable, stereotyped grin which constant experience in the *roles* of good-natured matrons may have made second nature in this case, but which appears natural to so many German women. Here, with short cut hair and blue glasses (her stockings are doubtless blue too if we could but see them) is Frau Immerschreiben, whose husband edits the *Nichtszubestillen Zeitung*; they say she writes all the leading articles and the original poetry for which it enjoys so just a reputation. She is at present at work upon a new novel and it is conjectured is seeking fresh characters for portraiture therein. Here is a group of smokers comprising Kuockerbein the drunken doctor (a clever fellow though, and best when he is drunk) Klopstock, the one-eyed avocat, Koch, the horse-dealer, and Bauermann, the cloth merchant, who are waiting to satisfy their curiosity in the matter of arrivals and departures, before going into the Kron Printsen for their evening game of *L'hombre*. And as the whistle sounds see the worthy host of that renowned establishment himself saunters across the road, his hands in his pockets and a huge cigar between his lips in happy expectation of stray tourists or jocund, wine-imbibing commercial travellers.

It is the evening after the occurrence of the incident which opens this little sketch, and I am again, literally, at my post, that is to say, I am again leaning against that identical pillar at the Bahnhof and puffing a *fauxmille* of my yesterday's cigar. But to-day I am not alone, for, propping up the opposite column, his student cap set upon three hairs, a black tie carefully knotted across the tiny plaits of his goffered shirt, a good-humored smile parting his handsome lips, from which issues in tiny rings the perfumed incense of his cigarette, and a happy beam illuminating with a softened glare the "gig lamps," which gingerly resting on his finely-chiselled, aquiline nose, are the only sign of hard-reading about him—lolls in unstudied grace my elum and fellow-student, Carl Rasch. Carl and I have started together on a desultory foot-wandering, and charmed by the linden-shaded streets and the little gleaming white houses, the general air of happy indolence and *bonhomie* of Nichtszubestillen, have lingered here nearly a week already. Carl's only living relative, an aged, well-to-do, indulgent father, lives no nearer than Vienna, and I have no friends save in England, so we have decided—while other candidates for university preferment have hastened to astonish the members of their admiring home circles in village, town and city with their proficiency in Latin, Greek and Theology, their capacity for lager beer, and the varied exploits of the students' leisure hours—we have decided to pass our vacation in a ramble over the mountains and the valleys of the beloved Vaterland, without other aim or object than healthy exercise and innocent amusement, our sole equipment consisting in knapsack, fishing-rod and sketch-book.

Carl, a universal favorite, knows half the town already. Even Herr v. Guldenberg has nodded, and sunny curled Flora has smiled and beamed in acknowledgement of his low salute. The blue-blooded Graf has courteously returned his loyal bow. The theatrical damsels by deep courtesies and arch glances, their escort by a high-keyed *Guten Abend, Herr!* have signified their lively reminiscences of champagne punch. The laughter-loving *vis-à-vis* of the Apothek have expressed, as plainly as bright eyes may express, a desire for a more intricate acquaintance with the handsome stranger. Frau Immerschreiben has brought her blue glasses to bear on him approvingly, and nods, and friendly words from male acquaintances in all directions have testified a warm appreciation of the young student's social qualities.

As a distant shriek from the hoarse-toned whistle of the "Kleinstadt" warns the breaksmen to their posts and the pointsman to prepare the iron rod for the due performance of that graceful serpentine movement which the mail train ever effects before entering the gully between the double platform of the Nichtszubestillen Bahnhof. The dark, slouch-hatted, long moustachioed brigand-looking stranger of the previous evening, hurries towards the slowly-moving train. His keen black eyes throw searching glances at the interior of each carriage in succession till, with a glance of recognition, he forestalls the schaffner in giving egress to a lady—tall, pale, dark and beautiful—with a sad, weary, melancholy beauty, with a weird, *blase* air that ill-befitted her youthful figure's tone of vigor. It was one of these faces which, once seen, implant themselves indelibly upon one's memory—a face which, as I saw it that day,

light-d by the lengthening rays of the declining sun, I see before me now, no whit less clearly for the long vista of years that intervene.

The black eyes of the brigand searched the crowd an instant, till they rested on the host of the Kron Printsen. Obsequious, hat in hand, he was next moment at the stranger's side, receiving from him directions as to the scant baggage of the lady, who vanished, resting on her protector's arm, through the station buildings into the street.

"Carl, who is that man?"

The omniscient Carl was never at a loss.

"That is Christian Pferdenhof, director of the newly-erected cirque."

We lingered awhile amused at the varied character of the crowd that rushed, eager to make the most of its "ten minutes for refreshments," into the saloon where coffee, *butter brods* and beer were retailing, as fast as its spectacled mistress, two corkscrew-curved assistants and a pudding-faced boy could issue them to the greedy recipients, and then as the Kleinstadt uttered the first snort of onward progress, joined the stream of satisfied sight-seers which flowed towards the town, and sauntered over to dinner at the Kron Printsen.

Towards evening we found ourselves—Carl and I—in the billiard saloon of our hostelry. A game of "*A la guerre*" was in progress, and the circus director was among the players. He handled the cue with seeming carelessness, but he did this, as we soon discovered that he did everything, gracefully and well. He played for the most part "*pistolet*," poising his cue with a steady hand and generally driving his adversary's ball direct to the pocket "which," he commented, "is the best safety." Pool after pool fell to him, to the discomfiture of the crack players of Nichtszubestillen. Inspector Schultz grew more choleric and rubeund than ever. Col. Tausend took his own name in vain in a variety of oaths. Herr v. Guldenberg sat on the raised platform in sublime enjoyment of a brandy toddy, a cigar, and the fun of the scene. Towards midnight the room was cleared of the town residents, and the director, Carl and myself, were sole tenants of the saloon.

"Gentlemen," said Christian Pferdenhof, "I have had a successful evening, but though I delight in the exercise of my talents, I am not a billiard-sharper. What say you? Shall we drink a health to *Veuve Cliquot* before we retire?"

The varied and doubtless, excellent reasons why two young gentlemen, thirsty after the heat and pleasing excitement of an evening's amicable contest at a scientific game, should have refrained from tasting an excellent glass of a most refreshing beverage, we leave it to the fanatic devotees of the cause of temperance to adduce. We were not fanatics or devotees, and far too polite, not to say far too thirsty, to refuse an invitation so courteously proffered.

With the easy fluency of a man of the world the director, touching first upon indifferent topics, led the conversation insensibly to his own past, present, and future projects, with that delightful openness and candor that makes the continental stranger seem like an old friend ere you have been in his company half an hour.

Christian Pferdenhof, the courtly, stalwart, swarthy man, who sat before us with glittering eyes and gleaming teeth, with long flowing ebony locks, and glossy, wiry, drooping moustachios, with rings in his ears and single diamond upon his finger, had been born, and reared, and trained in the stalls of a travelling circus. From this he had risen by untiring energy and consistent courtesy, to become himself the head of an equestrian company of no small note, favorably known in all the continental capitals, and to have the distinction of being universally acknowledged as the most graceful exponent of the *haute menage* in Europe. Now, after fifty years of a successful career, having lost by shipwreck off the shores of Scotland his most experienced riders and nearly the whole of his stud of valuable ring horses, he had returned to his native land to commence once more, with unflagging zeal, his efforts as a caterer for the public amusement, purposing to collect and train during a provincial tour, a company which should one day again astonish and delight an audience composed of the *elite* of the great cities of the world.

(To be continued.)

A DESCRIPTION OF A BEEFSTEAK.

In order to give full value to this triumph of realism we must explain that the account of the beef-steak is given by one hungry man to another hungry man travelling along a country road in the snow.

"I'll tell you what you want now. You want a large, rich, thick, tender juicy rumpsteak. You want a rumpsteak four inches long by nine inches wide, by from an inch to three quarters of an inch thick. You want it smoking hot, and as full of gravy as an orange is of juice. You want it set right in front of you. You want a large white napkin, one of the good old-fashion forty-inch square napkins, spread all over you—not vulgar French-wise, stuck inside your waistcoat; not finikin French-wise, half open on one thigh. You want a great blaze of gaslight overhead, and four wine glasses and a pint tankard of beer at your right hand. You want a huge lump of old-fashioned household bread on your left. You want a vast raft of fried potatoes in front of you, and at one side of the potatoes the horse-radish and at the other a plate of creamy Spanish onions. You want a

bit of fat—a large bit of fat on the dish. A bit of fat about the size of a smoothing iron, a box iron, handle and all, and as soft and mellow as jelly, so that it shook every time your heart beat. Opposite, you want me.

"Then you begin to help me. You throw the carving-knife towards you across that trembling, smoking steak. Right across the steak suddenly appears a valley. The sides of that valley are red; in the bottom of that valley bubbles a shallow ruby stream, and from the sides plunge down tiny ruby rivulets of savoury promise. Through such a pass Moses led the Israelites across the Red Sea. You help me to a section of that steak. You cover it with horse-radish, you frost it with onion, you build around it ramparts of fried potatoes. I begin. I begin to eat. Clifford, are you listening? I say I begin to eat that hot, mellow, juicy steak. Are you listening?"

"Yes; but spare me."

"You see the gleam of delight upon my face as I taste its succulent charms, its grave deliciousness. You see hollow domes of milk-white onion follow the columns of beef. You watch the red brown slabs of potatoe gradually disappearing to help in the construction of my great palace of art. You are so spell-bound by the radiant expression of joy upon my face, you can think of nothing but heaping my plate. You work like a friend and a philanthropist for an hour. At last you hear me sigh. I throw myself back in my chair. You see something opposite you that looks like a silver shilling stuck up against a very bright penny. That's the bottom of my tankard surrounded by the shining margin of my face. You know I have finished dining. You think of yourself for the first time. You look down; you utter a piercing shriek. All is gone. I have eaten up every morsel, and there is none for you.

"Confound you, Gardner; this is too bad! I saw it all; I smelt it all; and now I feel as if really it had been before me, and was suddenly snatched away. Upon my honor, Gardner, you should not have done that."

"My dear boy, you must not blame me. I ordered the dinner and I ate it. It is quite as easy for you to order another and eat it. I have dined. There is nothing so good for restoring the tone of the palate as bread. I am going to eat some, and then for a cosy chair and a good glass of port." He drew out his loaf and began eating it. When he had finished he stooped down, scooped up a handful of the brittle hard snow, and thrust it into his mouth. "And now," he cried, when the snow had melted down his throat, "now for my Hivannah," as he drew out a short wooden pipe and filled it with tobacco. Clifford ate his loaf and lighted his pipe, and, smoking in silence, the two walked on through the descending silence of night.

IN THE PULLMAN CARS.

Let me describe some of the experience of a Pullman's palace car. If the cars are full, it is rather embarrassing to a shy man. What must it be to the fairer sex? I had noticed that American couples are rather demonstrative in their endearments both on the "car" and steamboats, but this beats all. In the "sections" of a railroad car, as in a wooden house, even whispered remarks are very audible, especially at night, when everything is still. For example, one evening, when we had retired, a low voice was suddenly heard from the centre of the car—

"Fanny—Fanny—give me a kiss, and say you forgive me."

Then a little louder—

"Fanny—Fanny—I can't sleep unless you say you forgive me. Give me a kiss, and say you forgive me."

At last the voice of the penitent husband, regardless of the tittering from the surrounding partitions, spoke again—

"Fanny—Fanny—just one kiss, and say you forgive me."

At last a peppery old Indian officer, down at the end of the car, popped his head out and shouted—

"Oh, Fanny, for goodness sake! do give him a kiss, and let us get some sleep!"

Even then, amidst the outburst of laughter from the other passengers, you could hear the poor man catching it in a certain lecture.

"There! I told you so! Now you see what you've done! I knew every one could hear you!"

But at last peace reigned, and possibly Fanny gave him the narcotic kiss of reconciliation. — *Sketches of Travel.*

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