

Count Waldemar von Ravensburg; had informed me that he held a lieutenant's commission in a Württemberg hussar regiment, and was in Homburg for the purpose of riding in some proposed military steeple-chases; and had strongly advised me to dine that evening at the Hessischer Hof, where he said I should get good German fare, greatly superior to the spurious French cooking of the more fashionable hotels.

"I shall be dining there myself mit all my friends," he added, by way of final inducement.

Under ordinary circumstances such a consideration as this would have sufficed of itself to drive me elsewhere in search of my evening sustenance; for sincerely as I appreciate the many amiable social qualities of German officers, I know what these gentlemen are when a number of them get together, and I am fond neither of being deafened nor of having to hellow like a skipper in a gale of wind in order to make my own remarks audible. But I had taken such a fancy to Count Waldemar, he struck me as so genial and original a type of fellow-creature, that I was loath to lose an opportunity of prosecuting my acquaintance with him; and accordingly the dinner-hour (half-past five), found me at the door of the little Hessischer Hof.

A most cacophonous din burst upon my ears as I entered, from an assemblage of spurred and uniformed warriors, who, as the manners of their nation is, were exchanging civilities in accents suggestive of furious indignation. My young hussar detached himself from the group, greeted me with the warmth of an old friend, and presented me to each of his comrades in turn:

"Meestr Clesford—Herr von Blechow, Herr von Kochow, Herr von Katow, Herr von Wallwitz, Herr von Zedlitz, Herr von Zeschwitz," etc. etc. Perhaps these were not their names; indeed, now I come to think of it, I believe they ran into considerably more syllables; but it does not much matter. They were all very polite, and indeed were as pleasant and jovial a set of youths as one could wish to meet. During dinner the conversation turned chiefly upon races and steeple chases, giving opportunity for many thrilling anecdotes, and with our desert we had some sweet champagne, over which we grew very merry and noisy.

When it was all over, Count Waldemar hooked his arm within mine, and in this familiar fashion we strolled out into the street, where (for it was early in August) broad daylight still reigned, and slant sunrays from the west streamed upon the long row of yellow droschkes with their patient, net-covered horses, upon the shiny hats of the drivers, upon the trim orange trees in their green tubs, and upon the distinguished visitors—English almost exclusively—who, by twos and threes, were slowly wending their way towards the terrace, where the band would soon strike up. Gusts of cool, fresh air were sweeping down from the blue Taunus range, setting the little flags upon the Kursaal fluttering, and banging a shutter here and there. Imagine to yourself a stalwart young hussar, moving with that modicum of swagger from which no cavalry man that ever lived is quite free, and which very tight clothes render to some extent compulsory upon their wearer; imagine, arm-in-arm with him, an Englishman of something under middle height and something over middle age, clad in a gray frock-coat and trousers and tall white hat, and you will have before your mind's eye a picture which, I grieve to think, is not wholly wanting in elements of the ridiculous.

I have reason to believe that the droschke-drivers saw it in this light; I fear that my compatriots did; I know that I did myself. But I am perfectly sure that the excellent Count Waldemar was not only free from the faintest suspicion that our appearance could provoke a smile, but that he never could have been brought to understand in the least why it should do so. No one could laugh louder or longer than he, upon occasion; but then he must have something to laugh at; and it would have been impossible to convince him that there could be any joke in the simple fact of two gentlemen walking together arm-in-arm. He was in all things the most completely un-self-conscious mortal I have ever known.

For my own part, I am not ashamed to confess—or rather I *am* ashamed but do confess—that the notion of being promenaded up and down the terrace, under the eyes of all my friends and acquaintances, by this long-legged and rather loud-voiced young officer alarmed me so much that I was fain to insist upon leading him down one of the more secluded alleys. He did not want to walk that way; he said we should neither hear the music nor see the people there; but I pointed out to him that it would be impossible for me to give my whole attention to his conversation in a crowd; and so, being a most good-natured soul, he yielded, and went on chatting about Stuttgart, and his regiment, and his brother officers, and his horses, in all of which subjects he seemed to think that I must be greatly interested. And so, indeed, I was—or, at least, in his treatment of them.

Just as we reached the point where the Untere Promenade crosses the Kursaal gardens we were met by a party of English people—an old lady, three young ones, and a couple of men carrying shawls—who came up the steps talking and laughing, and passed on towards the band. I should not have noticed them particularly had not a sudden convulsive jerk of my captive arm made me aware that my companion had some reason for feeling moved by their vicinity. The manner in which he paused, and, gazing after them, profoundly sighed, would have sufficiently revealed the nature of that reason, even if he had intended to conceal it—which of course he did not.

"Now I shall tell you something," said he, with an air of confidential candor all his own. "The lady you see there—the tall one who is walking alone—it is she whom I mean to make my wife."

"Indeed?" I answered. "I am sorry, then, that I did not look at her more closely. May I venture to ask her name?"

(To be Continued.)

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