

"Too true."
"Your religion enjoins you to give alms; but how are you to do this without money?"

"One may do good works without money," said Saxon.

"In a very limited degree. Not one-tenth part as many as if you had plenty of it. Did you never look at that side of the question, Saxon? Did you never wish to be rich for the sake of others?"

"I am not sure, but I do not think I ever did. I was so impressed with the belief that money was the root of all evil—"

"Pshaw! Things are good or evil, according to the use we make of them. A knife is but a knife, whether in the hand of a surgeon or an assassin; yet the result is considerably different. You must direct your mind of these fallacies, Saxon. They are unworthy of you."

Saxon put his hand to his brow uneasily.

"What you say sounds like the truth," said he; "and yet—and yet it is at variance with the precepts upon which I have relied all my life."

"Very possibly," replied Mr. Trefalden. "Precepts, however, are bad things to depend upon. They are made of India-rubber, and will stretch to cover any proposition. Let us suppose, now, that you were a rich man—"

"How absurd!" said Saxon, forcing a smile. "What is the use of it?"

"We will see what might have been the use of it. In the first place, you would have had good instruction, and have become an accomplished musician. You would have enriched yonder little church with a fine organ, and perhaps have rebuilt the church into the bargain. You would have furnished the poor sufferers of Embs with a staff of doctors and nurses, and have saved, perhaps, some scores of human lives. You would have been able to surround your uncle with comforts in his old age. You could have gratified your desire of visiting Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem. You could have lined the old chateau from top to bottom with Greek and Latin poets, and have founded a museum of Etruscan antiquities for your uncle's perpetual delight. Finally—"

He paused. Saxon looked up.

"Well, cousin," said he; "finally what?"

"Finally, rich men do not wear grey blouses and leather gaiters. If you had had a coat like mine on your back this morning, Saxon, Mademoiselle Colonna would not have taken you for a common peasant, and Signor Colonna would not have offered you money."

Saxon sprang to his feet with an impatient gesture. "Enough of would be, and might be!" exclaimed he. "Of what use are these speculations? I am not rich, and I never shall be rich; so it is idle to think of it."

"At all events," persisted Mr. Trefalden, "you admit the desirableness of wealth?"

"I—I am not sure. I cannot relinquish an old belief so hastily."

"Not even in favour of the truth?"

"I do not yet know that it is the truth. My mind needs further evidence."

"Of what, my son?" said a gentle voice close behind him.

It was the pastor. There was a field-path across those very meadows between Rotzberg and Reichenau, and the pine-trunk where the cousins had stayed to rest lay within a dozen yards of his course.

Saxon uttered a joyous exclamation.

"This is fortunate!" cried he. "You come at the right moment, father, to judge our argument."

"We were talking of riches," said Mr. Trefalden, rising, and grasping the old man's outstretched hand. "My young kinsman here preaches the language of an Arcadian, and declaims against the precious metals like a second Timon. I, on the other hand, have been trying to convince him that gold has a very bright side, indeed, and may be made to perform a good many wise offices. What say you?"

The pastor looked distressed.

"The question is a broad one," said he, "and there is much truth on both sides of it. But we cannot discuss it now. I want to talk to you, cousin William. I have listened down from Rotzberg, fearing all the time lest I should miss you. Were you not going to Chur?"

"We were going, and are going, by-and-by," replied Mr. Trefalden.

"Can you spare me half an hour before you start?"

"The whole day, if you please."

"Nay, an hour will be more than enough. Saxon, that which I have to say to our cousin is not for thy

ears. Go up, my son, to Taming, and inquire about that Indian corn-cog that farmer Retzelhel promised us last week."

Saxon looked surprised; but prepared to be gone without a word.

"Shall I come back here afterwards?" he asked.

"No. It would be better to await thy cousin at the Adler."

Saxon coloured, and hesitated.

"Could I not wait at the chapel?" said he.

"Ay, at the chapel, if thou wilt."

So the young man waved a cheery farewell, and started at once upon his uncle's errand. Looking back presently, at the turn of the path, he saw them sitting on the pine-trunk, side by side, already in earnest conversation. He saw Mr. Trefalden shake his head. He fancied there was some kind of trouble in the old man's attitude. What could his uncle have to say to one whom, kinsman though he was, he had never seen till the previous evening? Why this mystery about their conversation? It was very strange. Saxon could not help feeling that he must be himself concerned, somehow or another, in the matter; and this surmise added vaguely to his uneasiness.

CHAPTER XI. UP AT THE CHURCH.

Three hours later, Saxon was sitting alone before the organ in the little chapel on the hill. One hand supported his head, the other rested listlessly upon the keys. A tattered mass of Palestrina's lay open upon the music-desk, but Saxon's eyes were turned towards the door, and his thoughts were far away. He had been playing, half an hour or an hour ago, and had fallen since then into a long and anxious train of thought. He had even forgotten the little fair-haired uncle who acted for him as blower, and who had fallen fast asleep in the sunshine that streamed through the south window at the back of the organ.

It was a plain, whitewashed brown-stained little church, with a row of deal benches on each side of the aisle, and a pulpit to match. On a long board suspended from the roof just above the altar was painted, in gaudy characters of gold and scarlet, a German couplet, signifying "Where God is, there is liberty." The organ was of old dark oak, with ebony keys; and on the top stood a battered angel with a broken trumpet. It was a place of primitive simplicity, and no kind of architectural beauty. The beauty lay all without, among the Alps and pine forests that showed here and there through open doors and windows.

It was more than an hour past mid-day when Saxon Trefalden sat thus before the organ, and his cousin had not yet come to claim his company. His thoughts were busy, and his soul was disquieted within him. The uneasiness that he had felt on leaving those two to their solitary conference had now increased tenfold. Why was he excluded from it? And why should his uncle, who had never, as he believed, hidden a thought from him before, keep a secret from him now?

Then, what of this unknown kinsman, William Trefalden of London? Did Saxon really like him? The question was a difficult one. He scarcely knew how to answer it, even to himself. He thought he liked his cousin. Nay, he felt sure—almost sure—that he liked him. Not, perhaps, quite so well to-day as yesterday. Was it that an indefinite sense of mistrust mingled with the liking? No, that was impossible. His generous nature revolted at the thought. Was it that William Trefalden's opinions were so new to him, and went so far to unsettle his own preconceived notions of good and evil? Or was it that he was himself somewhat out of humour with the world this morning—somewhat less contented than of old? The organ, to be sure, had sounded more wheezy and thin than ever to-day, and his own playing had seemed clumtier than usual. Besides, that matter of the twenty francs was hard to forget. Well, well, he certainly liked his cousin; and as for poverty, why he must put up with it, and make the best of it, as his father and uncle had done before him. Then with regard to Olympia Colonna—Pshaw! were she fair as Helen, and patriotic as Camilla, it would make no difference to him. Saxon flattered himself that he was invulnerable.

At this point of his meditations, a shadow fell upon the threshold, and was followed by the substance of William Trefalden.

"I am ashamed, Saxon," said he, "to have kept you waiting for me so long. Your uncle is gone home, and I suppose it is too late to think of Chur to-day. Is this the organ?"

Saxon bent his head affirmatively.

"So! a lumbering old box of pipes, only fit for fire-wood! What say you? will you present the parish with a new one?"

"I hope the parish will not have to wait till I do so," replied Saxon, with a faint smile.

"But I am serious. Will you order one from Geneva, or have it brought all the way from Paris?"

"Cousin William, what do you mean?" faltered Saxon, his heart beginning to beat faster, he knew not why.

Mr. Trefalden laid his two hands on the young man's shoulders, and looking him steadily in the face, replied: "This is what I mean, Saxon. In three or four weeks' time you will be a rich man—a very rich man—ten times richer than Count Planta, or any nobleman here."

"I—rich—richer than—I do not understand you!" said Saxon, brokenly.

"It is the absolute truth."

"But my uncle—"

"He knows it. He has known it since before you were born. He has desired me to tell you all the story of your inheritance."

Saxon put his hand to his forehead, and turned his face away.

"Not just yet—not here," he said, in an agitated voice. "I—I am so taken by surprise—almost terrified. Will you leave me for a few minutes? I will come out to you presently in the churchyard."

"Oh, certainly," replied Mr. Trefalden, and turned towards the door. Saxon sprang after him, and grasped him by the arm.

"One moment," exclaimed he, pointing to a little stone tablet set into the church wall about half way between the organ and the porch. "Did he know, too?"

The tablet bore the name of Saxon Trefalden and date of his death.

"Your father and your uncle both knew it," replied Mr. Trefalden, gravely. "This fortune would have been his now, instead of yours, if he had lived to claim it."

Saxon turned away with a deep sob, and his cousin went out into the sunshine.

Left alone in the little silent church, the young man covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears.

"God help me!" murmured he. "What shall I do? I am so young, so ignorant, so unfit to bear this burden. God help me, and guide me to use these riches rightly!"

And then he knelt down beside the little organ, and prayed.

CHAPTER XII. ON THE TERRACE AT CASTLETOWERS.

A broad gravelled terrace lying due east and west, with vases of massive terra-cotta full of glossy evergreens placed at regular intervals along the verge of the broad parapet. A mighty old Elizabethan mansion of warm red brick, standing back in a deep angle of shade, with all its topmost gables, carved scutcheons, and gilded vanes glittering to the morning sun. A foreground of undulating park traversed by a noisy rivulet, and rich in old gnarled oaks planted at the time of the Restoration. A distance of blue hills, purple common, relieved here and there by stretches of fir plantation jutting out into the hazy heath-land, like wooded promontories—loping to the sea. On the terrace, a peacock with all his gorgeous plumage displayed; a lady feeding him from her own white hand; and two gentlemen standing by. The time the second day of April, balmy, sunny, redolent of the violet and the thorn. The county, Surrey. The place, Castletowers.

"How you flatter that bird, Mademoiselle Colonna!" said one of the gentlemen; a tall, soldierly man, with a deep sabre-scar across his left temple, and some few grey hairs silvering his thick moustache and beard. "His disposition was always a perfect balance between vanity and ill nature, but since your advent, the brute has become more insufferable than ever. Take care! I never see your hand so near his beak without a shudder."

"Fear nothing on my account, Major Vaughan," replied the lady; "and pray do not be unjust to Sardapalus. He is quite an altered bird; and as gentle as a dove—with me."

"You do well to add that clause, my dear lady, for we all can bear witness to the way in which his majesty 'takes it out' in viciousness when you are not by. He flew at Guluaro not an hour ago, down by the five oaks yonder; and I believe, if I had not chanced to be within hail, and if the mare were not the most self-