

ONE LITTLE WORD.

Sweet Helen, in that eye of thine
There lks a wondrous spell;
It sparkles with a fire divine,
I know its magic well.
Thine are the lips of ruby red,
The teeth of pearly white,
The lily hand, the faultless head;
Thou Queen of Love by right.

Of auburn tresses, rich and rare,
Let other poets sing;
With thy dark locks naught can compare
Except the raven's wing.
Thy form is shaped in beauty's mould,
Be fitting such a face,
Whose every movement doth unfold
An ever-living grace.

With but a word thou canst assuage
This tempest of the heart;
Then wilt thou calm its passions' rage,
And peace and joy impart!
One little word—would'st thou it hear!—
For fear you'd vainly guess—
Dear girl, I'll whisper in thine ear,
That little word is—"Yes!"

T. H. F.

POWDER AND GOLD.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW A WOMAN KEEPS A SECRET.

I turned and ordered them to follow me, and great was their surprise and delight on entering the apartment to which I led the way. The weight of the casks was tested, the different packages carefully inspected, the cover of the open keg examined, and the labels minutely studied; meantime, while I was overwhelmed with questions, Glauroth hastily reckoned the whole amount, and a loud hurrah hailed the announcement that if the labels on the casks were correct, the sum would reach one hundred and ninety-five thousand francs! I took care that Friedrich should bring a sheet of paper from my room on which the number of kegs and the whole amount was written. This hastily scrawled document was witnessed by myself, Glauroth, and two other Uhlans, then I folded the leaf and handed it to Glauroth, saying:

"You must ride to Noroy at once, and inform the commander of our discovery. Take some one with you. The major will give you men enough to remove the treasure; make him understand that he must send a wagon. Be quick, and say nothing about my wound. Do you hear?"

Glauroth was too much excited over the discovery we had made to pay much attention to my words.

"I will make him understand that we all deserve the iron cross at least for the capture of such an enemy," he exclaimed.

I stationed two men as sentinels, one in the courtyard and the other in the lower hall, and then all necessary arrangements were completed. Glauroth went away to prepare for his ride, the others returned to their beds, and, after locking the door of the treasure chamber, I ordered Friedrich to do the same.

"How could you sleep so soundly?" said I; "it was worse than a bear in the winter. I thought you must be dead!"

"Yes, I did sleep very soundly," he answered, "and it still weighs upon me; I believe I need only to lie down again and I shall be asleep at once."

"Did you feel drowsy before you went to bed?"

"Terribly so, sergeant," said Friedrich; "just as if some one had mixed an opiate with my supper."

So saying he threw himself on his bed, and I sought mine, asking myself if it had not been a wise proceeding to leave the abbé's soothing powder untouched. To be sure, if I had taken it I should not have spent the night in such a state of sleepless excitement as was now the case. Such painful, inexpressible torturing, restless hours in which I was utterly desperate at the thought that I had been compelled to discover this horrible gold! I had nourished with secret delight, with quiet exultation, the confident hope that I should undoubtedly succeed in building a bridge over the gulf which undeniably separated me from Blanche, and now came this miserable, accursed gold, which falling on my beautiful bridge crushed and destroyed it, while the abyss yawned wider and deeper than ever, and from its black depths, desolate, dreary hopelessness looked forth.

At last, at last morning dawned. The sun appeared above the horizon, and rose higher and higher, but I made no effort to rise. I was weak, languid—my limbs seemed powerless. A girl brought me my breakfast. The abbé, although he had pressed his services upon me as a sort of physician, did not appear, and of course I saw nothing more of Blanche. The surgeon from Noroy, who had been expected to come that day, did not arrive. Friedrich had risen, complaining of headache, and slowly carried my messages to the soldiers. I at last summoned up all my courage and sent him to the abbé, telling him to urge the priest earnestly to come to me.

After a long delay the abbé came.

I begged him to take a seat by my bed, and said in a jesting tone, which must have seemed strangely forced:

"I did not take the powder you ordered last night, and therefore you became so angry with your patient that you gave him up. Is it not true? I could not blame you for it. However, I will make no farther claims upon your care;

my wound will probably heal without much surgical aid, and, at all events, is the least cause of my unhappiness. Ah! why did you do that?"

The abbé's manner was singularly abstracted and nervous; he avoided my eyes as I spoke, and now stretched his hand toward the glass in which he had mixed the powder, and which still stood on the table beside the bed, raised it, and hastily drank half the contents.

"Why did you do that?" I exclaimed.

"You despised the means by which I sought to give you a comfortable night's rest," answered the abbé, "therefore I will take the powder myself, that it may not be wasted. After the scenes that occurred last night, the soothing influence it exerts upon the nerves will do me good."

"Ah!" said I, "I can relieve your mind in that respect. I did not think the powder was in the slightest degree injurious—nay, it would have had a most beneficial effect upon me, for if I had taken it I should have been as sound asleep as Friedrich, and you and Mlle. Blanche might have carried out your plans undisturbed. Now I am in despair over the sorrow I must have caused her, and this bitter despair has driven me to beg an interview with you. I wished to learn what Mlle. Blanche now thinks of the affair—whether her wild, incomprehensible agitation has been calmed; I wished to explain that it was not necessary to be so deeply affected by the occurrence, that it is not worth—"

The abbé shrugged his shoulders, and gazed sadly upon the floor while I eagerly continued: "The little band of Franciscans, in their fear of being captured, placed the money they were guarding in your house for greater security; we discovered this accursed treasure and are compelled to confiscate it, but I will give you a certificate for it, signed and sealed by my colonel; you will then be entirely free from all responsibility; it is a simple *vis major*, to which you were compelled to yield—no man on earth can reproach you or Mlle. Blanche for doing so."

"You do not understand the affair, sir," replied the abbé; "I will explain it to you if you wish."

"Speak, I beg of you; tell me all."

"The money was sent by the prefect of the Department of the Upper Saone, and was intended for the raising and equipment of the battalions of the Garde Mobile on the Saone, who, for greater security, were sent to Besançon, to be formed under the protection of the fortifications. As the direct road to Besançon was no longer safe—intelligence had been received that your outposts were approaching, and that you would probably advance along the road to Besançon—the money was conveyed eastward along the highway leading through the valley of the Oignon, in order to reach Besançon by way of Montbazoin. But, as has so often happened in this ungodly war, you moved faster than we; the wagon containing the money was stopped by your band on a road where they least expected you; the gendarmes and Franciscans who accompanied it had scarcely time, as you know, to convey the treasure into this house. Mlle. Blanche received it, ordered it to be carried into the room best adapted for such a purpose, which was the one formerly used by M. Kuhn for his money and valuable papers, and was provided with iron chests, barred windows, and a door secured by two locks; it was so natural that in our haste nothing should be thought of but obtaining some place of concealment. After the little casks were brought in and hidden for the time, the Franciscans breathed more freely; and as their minds were relieved from anxiety their courage returned, and discovering that their numbers were about the same as yours, they resolved to defend themselves against the approaching Uhlans. It was decided to fire a volley upon you through the grated door of the courtyard, then rush back into the house and shoot you down from the windows. You may imagine our alarm at this proposal; yet such a scene would undoubtedly have taken place had it not been for Blanche, who entreated them to withdraw, as the struggle would undoubtedly result in the burning of our house, and such a terrible event would kill her mother. She represented the uselessness of bloodshed, that the hostile party might pass by and they could return at night and remove their money; she also added that she would hold her whole property as security for the safety of the kegs of gold, if they would only go at once and resign all idea of a conflict, whose effect upon her invalid mother Blanche dreaded more than anything else."

"And on this security the people were persuaded to withdraw?" I asked, greatly excited by the story.

"They said no more, and were led by Max, our gardener, into the grounds, through which they disappeared. It was quite time, for the hoofs of your horses were already sounding in the avenue. You came, and to our horror announced that you intended to remain; to our still greater dread you took possession of these rooms for your servant and yourself, and the only means of access to the money was by passing through these apartments."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "how unfortunate all this was for you. That was why you came to us in the evening to try to ascertain the length of our stay, and when I gave you an answer by no means reassuring, Mlle. Blanche decided to take that moonlight walk on which I met her. She had gone to warn the Franciscans that they would not be able to take their casks away."

"You are right, she was obliged to send away the men, who had remained concealed in the

bushes on the banks of the Oignon. To satisfy them, she gave them a sheet of paper certifying that she had received the sum of money, and would be responsible for it. In this way, she at last succeeded in sending them away, although they had decided upon attacking the chateau at night, and murdering you all."

"We were somewhat on our guard against any such nocturnal surprise," I interrupted, "but, who knows, although Mlle. Blanche has done all this solely from consideration and anxiety for her mother, she has perhaps saved the lives of several of my men, mine especially, for I was separated from my soldiers! So she sent these people away with a written acknowledgment?"

"She succeeded in sending them away; the gendarme returned to report the matter to his prefect, and deliver Blanche's document; the Franciscans continued their way to Besançon. We should now have waited before pushing matters farther had it not been for our anxiety lest you should discover our secret, and you yourself had not at last told Blanche that you suspected something. After that she had no rest or peace; we were compelled to form the plan whose execution last night resulted so unfortunately, as you know!"

"And Mlle. Blanche," said I, after a pause, "does she consider herself bound to replace the whole sum? That would be terrible!"

"You are right," replied the abbé, "it is terrible. The property left by Monsieur Kuhn to his family consists of two hundred thousand francs bequeathed to his widow, and the same amount to his daughter; this house and the farm at Colomier belonged originally to Madame Kuhn, and are to go to a son by a former marriage, Blanche's half-brother, who is now living in Liverpool as French consul. You see that the demand will absorb the whole of Mlle. Blanche's property!"

"Ah! impossible!"

"What is impossible?"

"That she should be required to give up her property, all that she possesses, to indemnify the country; the country must bear the losses brought upon it by the war it desired."

"You do not know my cousin," answered the abbé, with a sad smile.

"No, no," I continued in the greatest excitement, "that cannot be; it is not possible that she should be required, compelled, to sacrifice herself!"

"Compulsion will not be necessary. She herself does not wish it otherwise; she has made herself responsible, and will not withdraw now; the matter concerns her native country, and France is in no condition to refuse the self-devotion of her children; this is no time for her children to lightly evade their duties."

I was silent. My brain whirled at the thought of the misfortune I had brought upon Blanche; I felt irresistibly compelled to rush to her side, to implore her—to do what? that I did not know; for the abbé had told me only the simple truth; I myself had but too much reason to believe that Blanche was far too generous and noble to adopt any other course of action than the one he mentioned.

Yet I rose from my bed, I could not endure to lie there quietly; the abbé sat with drooping head, and hands clasped idly on his knees, gazing steadily at the floor. I begged him to call Friedrich, who always helped me to dress, but at that moment he entered and reported that a detachment from our regiment was approaching Chateau Giron. I dressed as rapidly as my wounded arm would allow. In a short time the detachment wheeled into the courtyard; it was a whole train under the command of an officer. I went out to meet him, and made my report. He was naturally very much surprised to find me wounded, wished to see the injury, and expressed a very decided opinion that I was not fit to remain on duty. I employed all my eloquence to induce him not to send me to a hospital, and at last obtained permission to remain in my present comfortable quarters a few days longer, after which I was to proceed to Noroy, report to our commander, and abide by the staff surgeon's decision.

"You will receive a lieutenant's commission at once," said he; it was sent to the commander day before yesterday, as he ordered me to inform you. In addition you will be also suitably rewarded for the prize you have secured; and now we must proceed to the business for which I have come here. Where is the money?"

I led the way to the treasure; he counted the little casks, compared the number with the list I had given Glauroth, took possession of them and ordered them to be placed in the wagon which had followed the little band. Fifteen minutes later, leaning against the doorway of the chateau, I saw the treasure chests of the Garde Mobile of the Upper Saone, surrounded by our Uhlans, pass through the grated door of the courtyard of Chateau Giron, and I could now dismiss the two guards whom I had ordered out for the greater security of the treasure.

Fortunately Glauroth relieved me from his voluble account of his ride, and the events that had occurred at headquarters; he went to dinner with the soldiers, my meals were served in my room, and I thanked God for the opportunity of being alone.

Alone, with the infinitely sorrowful thoughts that occupied my mind, and which I should have been ashamed to confess to any human being. A heavy weight lay on my heart; I was almost ready to burst into tears. When the rough, open wagon containing the money rolled through the door of the courtyard, it seemed to me as if it were not the wretched gold, but

the coffin of some beloved friend that was borne away. It was probably my wound, my exhaustion, the feverish condition in which I was, that caused me to feel so weak, so depressed, so utterly crushed and spiritless. Yet I could not overcome the mood. In vain I said to myself,

"What is it save what happens in thousands of lives—a conflict between duty and inclination? It is the universal fate of mankind. Moralists have written long books about it, our novels and dramas form their plots upon this conflict, and if the lives of men contain events which deeply touch their souls, they all turn around this great point. Life is only one long lesson of the renunciation of inclination for the sake of duty; the whole effort of moral law is merely to compel us to give the victory to duty rather than inclination, even if we should not do so from inherent principle. And, in truth, there is nothing great in this conquest; he who is unable to make it is only a contemptible fellow, a weakling, a scamp, a criminal; the world does not applaud any, does not hail any as heroes who resist great temptations. The world is hard, very hard! One's own conscience, a secret sense of happiness, is the reward. Oh! God, I feel very little happiness!"

In truth, the consciousness that I had treated Blanche without any consideration, and had done my duty wholly uninfluenced by her entreaties, did not save me from being utterly wretched. What did philosophy, reflection, or reasoning avail in this matter? The arguments of reason and the example of others make as little impression upon us in such situations as the experience of other men helps us in life. The individual peculiarities of our situation exert their overmastering power upon us; we always have the feeling that our calamity has something unusual, and as if we had a special right to rebel against fate.

Hundreds of thousands as well as I might have been forced to renounce their wishes for the sake of duty, but not one of them was thereby compelled to resign such a girl as Blanche! Oh! God, how every fibre of my heart clung to her; and yet I must tear her from it. How truly I felt that I could not live without her, and yet I must go away without the faintest hope of seeing her again. What an enigma my careless light-heartedness, my unconscious insolence, the jesting mood I had shown in my intercourse with her now seemed. Alas, I had felt so sure of my prize, I had at last grown so overbearing, that I ventured to allude to a game she was trying to play with me—so childishly overbearing. And now I would have knelt before her, worshipped this high-hearted girl, with her noble, self-sacrificing heart, her firm, resolute character.

And I had not even the consolation of telling her how I admired her. Was it any satisfaction to say to myself that at least she must esteem me; that even if she hated me for what I had done, she must acknowledge I had fulfilled the commands of duty steadfastly and firmly. No, I had not even this consolation, if it was one. Our mutual situations were so unfortunate that not even this comfort was left to me. For what was the meaning of the words now uttered by Blanche, except that my acts proved the falsity of my words when I told her of my love. She had often mentioned her opinion of men, if such was her judgment, she could not help thinking that I had sought from the first to deceive her in order to win her confidence, lure her secret from her, and thus obtain possession of this accursed gold.

It was enough to drive me mad; the thought was horrible. I could not bear it; I must do something to remove the idea from Blanche's mind. I revolved one plan after another to attain this object, but before any decision could be made I was disturbed; the abbé entered with a very pleasant little gentleman, whom he introduced as the family physician. I was obliged to allow him to examine my wound and bind it up afresh; he thought it no very serious affair, but ordered me to keep perfectly quiet, and urged me not to move the arm for at least two days. This prescription was very welcome, as I could appeal to it in case the information given by the officer should lead me to be recalled from my post at Chateau Giron, and I resolved to do so if my commander chanced to be of a different opinion from the first lieutenant who had granted me permission to remain.

After the physician left me Friedrich appeared, and then Glauroth entered to make his report. The latter did not wait for me to commence a conversation—I could not escape him, as I had gone to bed. He had read the Chevalier von Faublas, and, while smoking his cigar, indulged in all manner of nonsensical comments upon it. "I shall look into French literature a little more," said he; "it seems to me that very sweet fruits grow in that garden—a little over-ripe, but, like medlars, all the more pungent on that account. The polishing influence exerted upon men by this war with France is really remarkable!"

"I hope you won't cultivate your taste so far as to have a fancy for medlars," I replied.

"Who knows? German acorns may be much more nourishing and healthful, but you must admit they are indigestible."

"Tell me, Glauroth," I interrupted, "to change the subject—your father is a merchant, isn't he?"

"Yes, he is a merchant, and labours principally to provide the Germans with woollen night-caps, under-shirts, and jackets; he makes everything that lies close and warm over one's heart. Why do you ask? Do you intend to give the firm of Glauroth a handsome order—"