

action done by any single nation since the world began, save only one or two done by England. I grant you that. Statesmanship means lying for the good of your country, and there is a regular method which is known and adopted everywhere. Except to the ignorant people, it means nothing, and imposes on no one."

"Why not start fair again all round, and speak the truth?"

"What? and spoil the game? Heaven forbid! We have our little fictions in society, why not in diplomacy also? I do not want, as I once told Ladislav Pulaski, to live in a world gone good. It would be tedious to me, that kind of world. And, at my age, I cannot unlearn things. Let us go on as we have always gone on—one nation trying to cheat every other—ambassadors lying—secret service reduced to one of the fine arts—and let us watch the splendid spectacle, unequalled in history, of a nation following a line of policy from generation to generation, beaten at one point and carrying it forward at another—always advancing, always aided everywhere by a swarm of secret agents."

Afterwards repeating the conversation to me, "The man," said Leonard, "is a Russian agent himself. I am certain of it. No German ever talked English so well; he has the best Russian manner: he is *rusé*, polished, and utterly, cynically frank, unscrupulous, like all the people connected with the Russian Government. He has an important mission here, no doubt, and must have picked up a good deal of information during all these years. I wonder what his name is, and what his real rank in the police."

"You are only guessing, Leonard."

"Perhaps, but I am sure, all the same. My dear boy, I know them. There were Russian papers on the table, too. I saw the *Golos*, of Moscow, among others. He is no more a German than you or I. 'Served in the Austrian Cavalry.' Fudge and flap-doodle! as Mrs. Pontifex says. Curious, to see the patronising way in which he talked. I am only a young officer of that stupid nation where diplomatists speak the truth. I should like to checkmate our friend on his own ground."

"But,—Celia?"

"Do you think I am going to let Celia be handed over to a Russian spy?" he asked, grandly. "A Russian officer would be a different thing. There are splendid fellows among them. But a spy? Pah! The thought makes me feel ill. Besides, Laddy," he laughed, "I don't think we will let Celia go out of England at all. She is too good for any but an Englishman."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE FOURTH ESTATE.

I was sitting in Leonard's quarters two days afterwards, idling the time with him, when I became aware of a familiar figure walking slowly across the barrack yard. It was that of Mr. Ferdinand Brambler. I had not seen any of the family for some time, having been entirely occupied with Celia, Leonard, and my Polish schemes. He bore himself with quite his old solemnity, but there was something in his manner which showed change and decay—a kind of mouldiness. As he drew nearer it became too evident that his outer garments were much the worse for wear, his boots down at heel, and his whole appearance pinched and hungry. Things must have been going badly with the children. My heart smote me for neglecting the Bramblers. Were all of them, including my poor little bright-eyed Forty-four, in the same hungry and dilapidated condition?

He made straight for Leonard's quarters, and, coming in out of the broad sunlight, did not at first see me.

"Captain Copleston!" he asked timidly.

"I am Captain Copleston," said Leonard.

"What can I do for you?"

"Sir," said the great Ferdinand, drawing himself up, "I introduce myself as representing the Fourth Estate. I am the Printing Press."

"You don't look like one," replied Leonard, flippantly. "But go on."

"Don't you know me, Mr. Ferdinand?" I asked, jumping up and shaking hands with him. "Leonard, this is my old friend, Mr. Ferdinand Brambler, the brother of Augustus Brambler, whom you recollect, I am sure."

"Of course I do," said Leonard. "How do you do, Mr. Brambler? Your brother was a little man, with a comical face that looked as if he was too jolly for his work. I remember now. Is he in the Legal now, in the Clerical, or in the Scholastic? And will you take a glass of wine or a brandy and soda?"

"My brother Augustus devotes his whole energies now to the Legal," said Ferdinand, slowly. "I will take a brandy and soda, thank you. With a biscuit or a sandwich, if I may ask for one."

"Send for some sandwiches, Leonard," I said.

"And how are you all in 'Castle Street'?"

"But poorly, Pulaski. Very poorly. The children are not to disguise the truth—ahem—breaking out again, in a way dreadful to look at. Forty-six is nothing but an Object—an Object—from insufficiency of diet. Too much bread and too little meat. Ah! the good old days are gone when things were going on—things worthy of a historic pen—all round us, and money flowed in—literally flowed in, Captain Copleston. What with a prize ship here, an embarkation of troops there, the return of the wounded, an inspection of militia, and all the launches, I used to think nothing of writing up to a leg of mutton in three or four hours, turning off a pair of boots as if it was nothing, putting a great coat

into shape in a single evening, throwing in a gown for Mrs. Augustus and a frock for Forty-four, or going out in the morning, and polishing off a day's run into the country for the whole family out of a visit from the Commander-in-Chief. I used to laugh at that as only a good day's work. Happy time! You remember how fat and well-fed the children were once, Mr. Pulaski. But those days are gone. I despised then what I used to call the butter and eggs. Alas! the butter and eggs are nearly all we have to live upon now."

"You mean—"

"I mean, gentlemen, the short paragraphs poorly remunerated at one penny for each line of copy. One penny! And at least half of the sum goes in wear and tear of shoe leather worn out in picking up items about the town. I am a chiffonier, gentlemen, as we say in the French. I pick up rags and tatters of information as I peregrinate the streets. Nothing is too trifling for my degraded pen. I find myself even, in the children's interests, praying for a fire or murder or a neat case of robbery. Here, for instance, is a specimen of how low in the literary scale we can go."

He pulled a little bundle of papers out of his pocket.

"SINGULAR ACCIDENT"

"As our esteemed townsman, Alderman Cherrystone, was walking along the pavement of High Street on the morning of Monday last, he stepped upon a piece of orange peel, and falling heavily, dislocated his arm. The unfortunate gentleman, who has been removed to the hospital, is doing well."

"Mr. Pulaski," he asked in withering sarcasm, "that is a pleasant thing to come to after all my grandeur, is it not? Think of it, you who actually remember my papers on the arrival and departure of troops. But it is sixpence," he added with a sigh. "Here is another of the same sort. I call it," he added in a sepulchral voice,

"A LIKELY STORY."

"On Thursday, before His Worship the Mayor, a young man of dissipated appearance, who gave the name of Moses Copleston—"

"What?" cried Leonard. "Moses Copleston?"

"Yes, sir, your own name was that given by that individual."

"Go on," said Leonard, looking at me.

"And said he was the son of a general in the army, was charged with being drunk and disorderly in the streets. The police knew him well, and various committals made in another name were reported of him. He was fined 40s. and costs, or a fortnight. The money was instantly paid, and the prisoner left the court laughing, and saying there was plenty more to be got where that came from."

"The mayor recalled him—"

"Will you give me that paragraph?" Leonard interrupted, and with an excited air. "Will you allow me to keep that out of the paper? I have a reason—it is my own name, you see."

"Certainly, sir," said Ferdinand. "I have no wish to put it into the paper, except that it is fourpence. And that goes some way towards the children's dinner, poor things."

"I will give you more than fourteen-pence for it, my good friend," said Leonard. "Where is this prisoner—this Moses—do you know?"

Of course I perceived the suspicion that had entered his mind. He was jumping at conclusions, as usual, but it was hard not to believe that he was right. I began to think what we knew of our old enemy Moses, and could remember nothing except what Jem Hex—Boatswain Hex—told me—that he was not a credit to his education. This was but a small clue. But some shots in the dark go straight to the bull's-eye. Leonard's eye met mine, and there was certainty in it.

I saw he wanted to talk about it, and so I got rid of Ferdinand by proposing to bring Leonard to his house in the evening, when he should pump him, and extract materials for a dozen papers.

"It is very kind of you, sir," he said. "You will enable me to confer on the children next week—ahem—a sense of repletion that they have not experienced for many months."

"I will tell you anything you want," said Leonard. "But you must ask me, because I cannot know, beforehand, what you would most like to have."

"Sir," said Ferdinand fervently, "I will pump you to good purpose if you will allow me. Your own exploits, ahem—"

"No—no," said Leonard, laughing. "I must make conditions. You must keep my name out of your story."

Ferdinand's countenance fell.

"If you insist upon it—of course. But personalities are the soul of successful journalism—it will be seen that Ferdinand Brambler was in advance of his age—and if I could be permitted to describe these modest quarters in detail—camp bed, two chairs, absence of ornament—ah!—The Hero's Retreat; your personal appearance, tall, with curling brown hair, square shoulders, manly and assured carriage, eagle eye—ah!—The Hero at Home; your conversation, 'with difficulty can he be induced to speak of those hairbreadth escapes, those feats of more than British pluck, those audacious sorties—The Hero in Modesty; your dress when not on duty, a plain suit of tweed, without personal decoration of any kind, simple, severe, and in good taste—The Hero in Mufti; and your early life, a native of this town, educated

partly by Mr. Hezekiah Ryler, B. A., at the time when Mr. Augustus Brambler formed part of his competent and efficient staff, and partly by the learned Perpetual Curate of St. Faith's—'The Hero's Education; your entrance into the army, 'The Hero takes his first step'—"

"Stop—stop—for Heaven's sake," cried the Hero. "Do you believe I am going to consent to that kind of thing?"

Ferdinand collapsed.

"If you really will not allow it," he said, "there is nothing more to be done. Just as I was warming into the subject, too. Well, Captain Copleston, if you will not let me describe your own exploits by name, I shall be grateful for any particulars you may be kind enough to give me."

"Yes—on those conditions, that my name is kept out—I shall be glad to help you."

"Sir," said Ferdinand, "you are very good. I will pump you like—like—an orange blower. I will play on you like—like a Handel. At what time, sir, will you honour our humble abode?"

"We will be with you about eight," I said. "And—and—Mr. Ferdinand, will you give my compliments to Mrs. Augustus, and my love to Forty-four, and say that we hope to have the pleasure of supper with them. Early supper, so as to suit Forty-six and the rest."

Ferdinand sighed, and then smiled, and then with a deep bow to the Hero, retired.

"What about Moses?" cried Leonard.

"How do you know it is the real Moses?"

"There can be but one Moses," said Leonard;

"and how should any other get hold of my name? Do you think he is in the town, now?"

I began to make enquiries that very afternoon bethinking me that Mrs. Hex, Jem the Bo's'n's wife, might know something about it. Jem had been married some time now, and was the father of a young family, who lived in one of the streets near Victoria Row in a highly respectable manner. Mrs. Hex had been a young lady connected on both sides with the service, so that it was quite natural that she should marry a sailor, and it was an advantageous match on both sides. She remembered Moses perfectly well; he was always going and coming, she said; would be seen about for a day or two, and then would disappear for a long time; he had been in prison once for something or other; then he disappeared for some years; then he came back in rags; and then—just a short time ago—he suddenly blossomed out into new and magnificent toggery, with a gold watch-chain and a real watch, with rings on his fingers, and money in his pocket. And he got drunk every night. Also, he called himself Copleston, which Mrs. Hex thought should not be allowed. Most likely we might find him at the Blue Anchor in the evening, where there was a nightly free-and-easy for soldiers and sailors, at which he often appeared, standing drinks all round in a free and affable manner.

"Quite the Moses we used to love," said Leonard in a great rage. "We will go to the Blue Anchor and wring the truth out of him."

For that day we had, however, our engagement at the Bramblers', which we duly kept, and were ushered into the front room, Ferdinand's "study." He was sitting at the table in expectation of us, with paper and pencil before him. He was hungering and thirsting for information. Beside him stood Augustus, as cheerful and smiling as though the children were not breaking out. Except that he was shabbier than usual, there was no mark of poverty or failure upon him.

"This, Captain Coplestone," he said, "is a real honour. I take it as a recognition of my brother Ferdinand's genius. My brother Ferdinand, sir, is a Gem."

"Brother Augustus," murmured the author bashfully, "nay—nay."

"A Gem—I repeat it—a Gem. And of the first water. What says the poet?"

Full many a time, this Gem of ray serene,
Outside the Journal Office may be seen.

He will do you justice, sir. Mr. Pulaski," he sank his voice to a whisper, "shall we leave these two alone? Shall we retire to the domestic circle not to disturb History and Heroism? At what time shall we name supper, Captain Copleston? Pray, fix your own time. Think of your convenience first. We are nothing—nothing."

"I never take supper, thank you," said Leonard, who was beginning to be a little bored with the whole business.

"Don't speak of supper, to me," said Ferdinand. "This is my supper," he patted the paper affectionately. "This is my evening beer." He pointed to the inkstand. "This is my pillow," indicating the blotting-pad. "And for me there will be no night's rest. Now, sir, if you will sit there—so—with the light upon your face—we can converse. Affluence is about to return, brother Augustus."

Augustus and I stole out of the room on tiptoe. In the back room the table was laid, and the children were crowded in the window, looking at the cloth with longing eyes. Poor little children! They were grown pale and thin during these hard times, and their clothes were desperately shabby. Forty-four, a tall girl now of fourteen, angular and bony, as is common at that age, preserved some show of cheerfulness, as became the eldest of the family. It was hers to set an example. But the rest were very sad in countenance, save for a sort of hungry joy raised by the prospect of supper.

"Always something kind of the Captain," murmured the poor wife.

"It was lucky," I said, "that we had that cold round of beef in the larder. Cannot we have supper immediately? I am sure the children would like it."

The poor children gave a cry, and Forty-six burst into loud weeping.

"Things have not gone very well, latterly," said Augustus, looking uncomfortable. "Sometimes I even think that we don't get enough meat. We had some on Sunday, I remember—and this was Friday—because Ferdinand said it was the first real meal he had enjoyed for a week. That was while we were sitting over our wine after dinner."

Nothing, not even actual starvation, would have prevented the two brothers from enjoying their Sunday pretence of sitting, one each side a little table, at the front window, with a decanter and two glasses before them. I do not know what the decanter contained. Perhaps what had once been Marsala. Ferdinand cherished the custom as a mark of true gentility, and was exceedingly angry if the children came in and interrupted. He said grandly that a gentleman "ought not to be disturbed over his wine." I think Augustus cared less about the ceremony.

Meantime the mother, assisted by Forty-four and Forty-five, brought in the supper—cold beef and hot potatoes—with real beer—no toast and water.

I pass over the details of the meal. Even Augustus was too hungry to talk, and Forty-six surpassed himself. I sat next to Forty-four, who squeezed my hand furtively, to show that she was grateful to the Captain. She was always a tender-hearted little thing, and devoted to her brothers and sisters. The pangs of hunger appeared, we talked.

"You have now an opportunity," said Augustus, leaning back in his chair after the fatigues of eating; "you have now an opportunity of boasting, my children, that a Crimean hero has actually come to this house in order to tell the history of the war to your uncle Ferdinand, the well-known writer."

The boys and girl murmured. This was, indeed, grandeur.

"We will drink," said Augustus, filling his glass, and handing me the jug. "We will drink a toast. I give you, children, coupled, the names of Captain Coplestone, the Hero, and Ferdinand Brambler (your uncle, my dears), the historian. It is my firm belief that this night has commenced what I may in military language call an Alliance, or—speaking as a lawyer, one may say that this night has witnessed the tacit execution of a Deed of Partnership—a Deed of Partnership—he relished his words so much that he was fain to repeat them—"between the Hero and the Historian, which will result in their being known together, and indissolubly connected by the generations, yet to come, of posterity. For myself, I have, as you know, little other ambition than to be remembered, if remembered I am at all, as Augustus Brambler (your father, my dears), formerly an ornament to the Legal."

We drank the toast with enthusiasm. There were nowhere to be found children more ready to drink or eat toasts than the Bramblers.

"By our own family connections, Mr. Pulaski," Augustus continued, "we have more sympathy with the Navy than with the Army. Mrs. Brambler—your mother, my dears—is highly connected as regards that service; and it is, I confess, my favourite. Sometimes I think of putting Forty-six into it, though if they were wrecked on a desert island, and provisions ran short, he would come off badly. Forty-eight, of course, is out of the question where discipline and obedience are concerned. It would, however, have been just the service for poor little Fifty-one, my dears, had that interesting child been born."

He looked critically at Forty-six, sadly at Forty-eight, and shook his head. All hung their heads sorrowfully, as was customary at mention of the Great and Gifted Fifty-one—unborn.

"Two members of my wife's family—she was a Tellerwinch—were members of that gallant service, Mr. Pulaski. One of them, her uncle, held the rank of Master's Mate, and if he had not had the misfortune to knock down his superior officer on the quarter deck, would now, one may be justified in supposing, have been Rear-Admiral Sir Samuel Tellerwinch, K.C.B.—of the White. I drink to the health and memory—in solemn silence—of the late Admiral."

Such was Augustus's enthusiasm, that we all believed at the moment the deceased officer to have died in that rank.

"The Admiral," Augustus sighed. "You must not be proud, my dears, of these accidents—mere accidents—of distinguished family connections. Your mother's first cousin, James Elderberry, entered the service also. He was a purser's clerk. I think I am right, my dear, in stating to Mr. Pulaski that James was a most gallant and deserving officer."

(To be continued.)

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