

he had been building up with such love and devotion for the last twenty years or more, might, after all, have its foundations in the sand. This was a terrible thought, and so hard to bear that the pastor made up his mind to go down to Reichenau early in the morning, and talk the whole matter over with William Trefalden before he and Saxon should have started for Chur. When the morning came, however, a goat was missing from the flock. This mischance threw all the farm-work out of its daily course, so that the pastor started a good half-hour too late, quite expecting to find them both gone by the time he reached the Adler.

In the meanwhile, Saxon had overtaken his cousin in the garden of the Château Planta.

"Well," said Mr. Trefalden, "I began to think you were never coming. Take a cigar."

Saxon shook his head.

"I don't smoke, thank you," said he, hurriedly. "This way."

Mr. Trefalden noted the flush upon his cheek, and the agitation of his manner, and followed in silence.

The young man plunged down a labyrinth of narrow side-walks, till they came to one that sloped to the water-side. At the bottom of this slope, only a wire fence and a slip of gravelly bank lay between them and the river. A covered bridge spanned the stream a few yards higher up, and beyond the bridge lay the meadows and the mountains. Saxon, without deigning to touch the wire with his hand, sprang lightly over. Mr. Trefalden, less lightly, and more leisurely, followed his example. In a few minutes more, they had both passed through the gloom of the covered bridge, and emerged into the sunshine beyond. Saxon at once struck across the road, and took the field-path opposite.

"Is this the way to Chur?" asked Mr. Trefalden, somewhat abruptly.

Saxon started, and stopped.

"No, indeed," he replied. "I—I had forgotten. We must turn back."

"Not till I have finished my cigar. See—here is a shady nook, and an old pine-trunk, that looks as if it had been felled on purpose. Let us sit and chat quietly for half an hour."

"With all my heart," said Saxon. So they sat down side by side, far enough out of sight or hearing of the garden, in which Signor Colonna was searching for them on the opposite side of the river.

"By the way, Saxon, what kept you so long, just now?" said Mr. Trefalden. "Were you flirting with the fair Olympia?"

Saxon's face was scarlet in an instant.

"I—I offered to carry her letter," he replied, confusedly.

"The deuce you did! And she declined?"

"She misunderstood me."

"I am heartily glad of it. I would not have had you mixed up in any of the Colonna intrigues for a trifle. In what way did she misunderstand you?"

Saxon bit his lip, and the colour which had nearly faded from his face came back again.

"She thought I wanted to be paid for going," he said, reluctantly.

"Offered you money, in short?"

"Yes—that is, her father did so."

"And what did you say?"

"I hardly know. I was greatly vexed—more vexed, perhaps, than I ought to have been. I left them, at all events, and here I am."

"Without the letter, I trust?"

"Without the letter."

There was a brief silence. Mr. Trefalden looked down, thoughtfully, and a faint smile flitted over his face. Saxon did not see it. His thoughts were busy elsewhere, and his eyes were also bent upon the ground.

"I am sorry you don't join me in a cigar," said Mr. Trefalden. "Smoking is a social art, and you should acquire it."

"The art is easy enough," said Saxon. "It is the taste for it which is difficult of acquisition."

"Then you have tried?"

"Yes."

"And it made you giddy?"

"Not at all; but it gave me no pleasure."

"That was because you did not persevere long enough to experience the delicious dreaminess that—"

"I have no desire to feel dreamy," interrupted Saxon. "I should detest any sensation that left my mind less active than usual. I had as soon put on fetters."

Mr. Trefalden laughed that low, pleasant laugh of his, and stretched himself at full length on the grass.

"There are fetters, and fetters," said he, "fetters of gold, and fetters of flowers, as well as fetters of vulgar iron."

"Heaven forbid that I should ever know any of the three," observed Saxon, gravely.

"You have this very day been in danger of the two last," replied Mr. Trefalden.

"Cousin, you are jesting."

"Cousin, I am doing nothing of the kind."

Saxon's blue eyes opened in amazement.

"What can you mean?" said he.

"I will tell you. But you must promise to listen patiently, for my explanation involves some amount of detail."

Saxon bent his head, and the lawyer, puffing lazily at his cigar from time to time, continued.

"The Colonna family," said he, "is, as of course you know already, one of the oldest and noblest of the princely Roman houses. Giulio Colonna, whom you saw just now at the Adler, is a scion of the stock. He has been an enthusiast all his life. In his youth he married for love; and, for the last twenty or thirty years, has devoted himself, heart and soul, to Italian politics. He has written more pamphlets, and ripened more plots, than any man in Europe. He is at the bottom of every Italian conspiracy. He is at the head of every secret society that has Italian unity for its object. He is, in short, a born agitator; and his daughter is as fanatical as himself. As you saw them just now, so they are always. He with his head full of plots, and his pockets full of pamphlets—she exercising all her woman's wit and energy to enlist or utilise an ally."

"I understand now what she meant by the 'good cause,'" observed Saxon thoughtfully.

"Ay, that's the hackneyed phrase."

Saxon looked up.

"But it is a good cause," said he. "It is the liberty of her country."

Mr. Trefalden shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, yes, of course it is," he replied; "but one gets weary of this pamphleteering and plotting. Fighting is one thing, Saxon, and intriguing, another. Besides, I hate a female politician."

"She is very beautiful," said Saxon.

"She is beautiful, and brilliant, and very fascinating; and she knows how to employ her power, too. Those eyes of Olympia Colonna's have raised more volunteers for Italy than all her father's pamphlets. Confess now, would you have been so ready to carry that letter this morning, if the lady had worn blue spectacles and a front?"

"I cannot tell; but I fear not," replied the young man, laughingly. "But what has this to do with the fetters?"

"Everything. Granted, now, that the fair signora had known you were my cousin—"

"I suppose she took me for your servant," interrupted Saxon, somewhat bitterly.

"—and that you had really taken charge of that paper grenade," continued Mr. Trefalden, "can you not guess what the results might have been? Well, I can. She would not have offered you money—not a sou—but she would have smiled upon you, and given you her hand at parting; and you would probably have kissed it as if she had been an empress, and worshipped her as if she were a divinity; and your head, my dear Saxon, would have been as irretrievably turned as the heads of the false prophets in Dante's seventh circle."

"No, that it would not," said Saxon, hastily, with his face all on fire again at the supposition. "And besides, the false prophets were in the eighth circle, cousin—the place, you know, called Malebolge."

"True—the eighth. Thank you. Then you would have placed the grenade in whichever pocket lay nearest to the place where your heart used to be; and you would have gone to the world's end as readily as to Thüsis; and have been abjectly happy to wear Mademoiselle Colonna's fetters of flowers for the rest of your natural life."

"Nay, but indeed—"

"So much for the flowers," interrupted Mr. Trefalden. "Now for the iron. Once embarked in this 'good cause,' there would have been no hope for you in the future. In less than a month you would have been affiliated to some secret society. Dwelling as you do on the high road to Italy, you would have been appointed to all kinds of dangerous services; and the result of the whole affair would have been an Austrian

dungeon, whence not even Santa Olimpia herself would have power to extricate you."

"A very pleasant picture, and very well painted," said Saxon, with an angry quiver of the lip, "but an error, cousin, from beginning to end. I should have devoted myself neither to the lady nor the cause; so your argument falls to the ground, and the fetters along with it."

Mr. Trefalden had too much tact to pursue the conversation further, so he changed the subject.

"Are you fond of music?" he asked.

"Passionately."

"Do you play any instrument?"

"I play a little on our chapel organ, but very badly."

"By ear, I suppose?"

"Not entirely. My father learned music at Geneva in his youth; and all that he knows he has taught me."

"Which, I suppose," said Mr. Trefalden, "is just enough to make you wish it were more?"

"Precisely."

"Have you a good organ at the chapel?"

"No, a wretched thing. It is very small, very old, and sadly out of repair. Two of the stops are quite useless, and there are but five altogether."

"A wretched thing, indeed! Can't you get a new one?"

"I fear not. Perhaps when Count Planta comes back from Italy he may give us one. My father means to mention it to him, at all events; but then the count is always either in Naples or Paris. He may not come to Reichenau for the next three or four years."

"And in the meanwhile," said Mr. Trefalden, "the organ may die of old age, and become altogether dumb."

"Quite true," replied Saxon, with a sigh.

Mr. Trefalden glanced at him sharply, and a silence of some moments ensued.

"Don't you think, Saxon," said he, at length, "that it must be very pleasant to be rich?"

Saxon looked up from his reverie, and smiled.

"To be rich?" he repeated.

"Ay—as Count Planta, for instance."

"Are you serious, cousin?"

"Quite serious."

"Then I think it cannot be pleasant at all."

"Why not?"

"Because wealth is power, and power is a frightful temptation."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Trefalden.

"And a frightful responsibility, too."

"Nonsense again!"

"All history proves it," said Saxon, earnestly.

"Look at Athens and Rome—see how luxury undermined the liberty of the one, and how the desire of aggrandisement—"

Mr. Trefalden laid his hand laughingly upon the young man's mouth.

"My dear fellow," said he, "you talk like a class-book, or an Exeter Hall lecturer! Who cares about Rome or Athens now? One would think you were a thousand years old, at the very least."

"But—"

"But your arguments are very true, and classical, and didactic—I grant all that. Nevertheless, our daily experience proves money to be a remarkably agreeable thing. You, I think, are rather proud of your poverty."

"I am not poor," replied Saxon. "I have all that I need. An emperor can have no more."

"Humph! Are there no poor in Reichenau?"

"None who are very poor. None so poor as the people of Embs."

"Where is Embs?"

"About half way on the road to Chur. It is a Roman Catholic parish, and the inhabitants are miserably squalid and idle."

"I remember the place. I passed it on my way here yesterday. It looked like a hotbed of fever."

"And well it might," replied Saxon, sadly. "They had it terribly last autumn."

Mr. Trefalden faced round suddenly, leaning on his elbow, and flung away the end of his cigar.

"And so you think, young man," said he, "that because you have all you need, money would be of no use to you! Pray, did it never occur to you that these fever-stricken wretches wanted food, medicine, and clothing?"

"We—we did what we could, cousin," replied Saxon, in a troubled voice. "God knows, it was very little, but—"

"But if you had been a rich man, you could have done ten times more. Is that not true?"