

came as your heir-presumptive, my lord, to offer you his heart-felt condolence, to tell you the river had been dragged without success, and to enquire whether you or himself should officiate as chief mourner."

Tomple, in predicting this, was a true prophet. All happened exactly to the letter, yet all around looked so little like a tragedy of real life. And where was Hortense, and what her feelings? The evening of the scene on the river, after the real horror and remorse for having caused the suicide, as she thought, of the obstacle to her ambition followed the complacent sense of the advantages of so sudden and self-inflicted a removal. At her request, she was taken by her father to the house of Colonel Whyne, in Belgrave-square being the nearest to the river belonging to a friend. There, more than ever, the heroine of an admiring and excited group, Hortense related the despair of Leon Bauvin, and the fatal act which left her father heir to his just claims. Colonel Whyne had been present at the complete refutation of his story of the change of infants, at the arbitration in Somerset House; but the heat of the room had made him drowsy, and the assurance afterwards of Mr. Woolton, that the united testimony of the surgeons was a discovered piece of rascality, made him confess himself unable to follow the right clue.

"I shall be happy to wish you joy, my dear sir," said the gallant soldier; "when it all comes to a fortunate conclusion; but I confess myself totally unable to discover the truth. I am no lawyer."

Hortense was removed the following morning to the house, in Lower Brook-street, that her father had taken for the season; and the following letter was written in the quiet of her temporary home, at the time Mr. Woolton, according to Tomple's conjecture was proceeding to visit his supposed bereaved relative, the Earl of Charleton:

"To his Serene Highness Prince Ernest Walfenshredenfel, to the care of Field-Marshal Von Pillinsgrennen, Baden.—In my last letter I informed your highness that I was about compelled, by obedience to the wishes of my father, to expose the dying Earl of Charleton. I would have proved a faithful and tender nurse the few weeks he might have lingered; but fate has decreed to remove him to another world; therefore, my father and myself having now the rank required by the formalities of the german courts, your highness has only to place the proper announcement of your wishes in the hands of the chamberlain, Von Haufmans, and to claim the promise made by our august brother, that, once a countess in my own right, the marriage should receive his sanction. Let me then be insulted no more by the offer of the left hand in marriage to Hortense Woolton who though noble, was without title. I never have consented—I never will consent, to our union, but with the free right hand, giving me the title of serene highness, the ermine, the equerry, the ladies-in waiting, the guard of honor. Your last letter was too full of those passionate but vague expressions which I have before told you, suit neither my birth, my character, nor the trust I have placed in the truth and perseverance of your love. But I will not close this letter, my too dearly loved Ernest, &c."

Then followed lines from the heart. The letter was sealed and despatched, by previous permission, to one of the secretaries of the Prussian ambassador, in whose bag it departed from London, at the very hour in which with rage and despair distorting every feature, Gerald Woolton re-entered his house, and informed his daughter that Lord Stanmore was alive and well; that the discovery of their plan to decoy him on the river to the docks, and thence to Jamaica, had been announced to him in the gardens at Chelsea. That he dived and swam to a boat prepared

for him, and had passed the night at the Marquis of Seaham's, in St. James' square.

If great part of the torments of the eternally-condemned consist in mutual upbraiding and recrimination; there are scenes on earth which, in sad horror, give a foretaste of those worse, because hopeless, halls of anguish. Such as those occupied the following two hours in Brook street, during which some discoveries were taking place in Belgrave square, by Lady Emily Whyne, that tended to close—politely close—that house to both father and daughter. Lady Emily, on receiving Miss Woolton on the previous evening, had arranged that her eldest daughter, Georgina, should resign her room to her young friend, and sleep in a smaller one adjacent. This was effected, though half the night was passed, not in sleep, but in most unprofitable discourse. One confidence made that night was the now hoped-for marriage of Hortense to the youngest brother of a reigning duke in Germany; and the rough copy of the letter, just described, was then dictated by one and written in pencil by the other to Prince Ernest, which, on the departure of Hortense to her own house, had been accidentally left on the toilet table. This paper, in a handwriting which Lady Emily perceived to be that of her own daughter, was brought to her by the maid servants, who were restoring the room to its usual use; and Lady Emily Whyne, puzzled and shocked, read it over with Colonel Whyne, till, at length, their hearts were inexpressibly relieved to find that the tissue of falsehoods, and the secret engagement to the foreign prince, were to be traced, not to their own child, but to their late guest.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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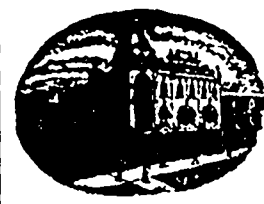
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