

CHAPTER II

The brothers were one morning together, when a letter was brought to Charles, which as he opened with some confusion Demetrius quitted his seat, and facing towards the glass, began to settle part of his dress.

“Thou wilt certainly grow a coxcomb, my good fellow!” said Charles (at last rising and laying his hand upon his brother's fine hair.)

Demetrius, with a look of alarm, exclaimed — “Do you really think so?”

Charles laughed “ No, on my honour or I should not have told you of it, so lightly; but to say the truth, you are no indifferent worshipper of your own image: if I may hazard a conjecture on the usual length of your devoirs, from the present specimen”

“ Attribute all the blame, to your confounded letter, Charles! I saw you were forced to spell it, and charitably tender of such dullness, removed myself out of your way.”

One must not read love letters before you, I find,” observed Charles.

“Is it a love letter? — my dear brother, do let me see it.”

“I did not say it was — indeed it is not: and whether it comes from man, woman, or boy, I am completely ignorant: — there it is, when you have read it, I will tell you, all the little I conjecture of its writer”

Demetrius nearly forgot that he had just thought himself in peculiar good looks that day, and that he meant therefore, to sally forth immediately; he snatched, the billet, which was written delicately, in a small hand, without a signature, and read as follows.

“I am more than ever, pleased with you: — your virtues are indeed sterling, since they bear the test of universal admiration. How sincere is the tribute my heart pays you, when I reflect upon the disinterested affection with which you are now guiding the unsteady steps of your brother: I foresee he will one day reward, by resembling his youthful mentor.

“Continue what you now are; suffer no praise, no consciousness of desert, to banish from your mind the solemn conviction, that all human goodness, stops far short of our divine pattern. It is only by forgetting this, that you can become arrogant.

“I hear of you everywhere; and always with honour: let it be your study to preserve this universal esteem. Believe me, you are not the less amiable for being rigidly upright: and receive this assurance from me, that your fine qualities, have secured to you one of the tenderest of hearts. — Adieu!”

“What I would give, to have such a letter written to me!” exclaimed Demetrius, “she must be the dearest creature in the whole world, — I haven't a doubt but that she is as beautiful as an angel”

“But can't you conceive the possibility of this 'dearest creature' having whiskers and a bald head?” said Charles smiling, “Don't you think you may have made a trifling mistake in the pronoun?”

“What! — is it a man after all? Pshaw! — I should not care a rush for the best letter that ever was penned, if it came from a stupid old object of a man.”

“Demetrius!”

There was a tender severity in the voice of Charles as he pronounced his brother's name, which brought the other, instantly to recollection: he blushed, and ingenuously protested against the levity with which he had spoken. “To be sure,” he added, “praise is sweet, from all good people, whether they be young or old; but you must allow that it is much sweeter when it proceeds from female lips? Now don't interrupt me Charles; I perceive you are going to say, such praise ought not to be half so valuable, because men, are generally, better qualified to give just reasons for their approbation — true — so they are; but then one is so grateful for a regard that outruns one's desert! — at least I am — 'tis that, makes me love you so well. But come; tell me who this worthy old gentleman is?”

“ So now, it is positively an old gentleman”

“ Why have you not expressly said so?” —

“No. — I only hinted it as a probability: you may recollect my having said I was ignorant of the writer's sex or age. So now, if your curiosity can be rekindled by the *chance* of my correspondent's turning out a 'dear creature, as beautiful as an angel', I will tell you how, and when, and where I received her first favour. But to do that satisfactorily, I must recapitulate the events of many years”

“My dear brother!” — exclaimed the grateful Demetrius, and eagerly seizing a chair, prepared to listen.

Charles was very modest: and the colour deepened in his cheek, as he thus began a regular account of his short, and meritorious existence.

“You know that I was so unfortunate as very early in my career, to lose the prince de E——, from whose friendship I had reason to expect so much; he fell in a duel; just after having taken me a most improving tour through Switzerland and Italy, and obtained for me the first commission I held under the Emperor — I was then thrown completely upon my own resources; and forced to content myself with the prospect of remaining an obscure individual, all my life. It would be frivolous to fatigue you now, with a narrative of my petty

adventures, during the four following years; they were precisely like other young men's. Sometimes I fancied myself in love, or beloved; sometimes I was persecuted by the advances of other men's mistresses; or was occupied, by finding enemies in friends, and friends in enemies. Doubtless, had I not had the blessing of a virtuous education, under the eye of a tender mother, I should have yielded to the temptations around me, and made my desperate prospects, an excuse for rendering them worse. As it was, I had discretion enough to prefer occupation before idleness; sound sleep, before nights of revelry; so I studied, when others sought pleasure; and when our regiment, was ordered into service, I made my first campaign in ninety three, with several advantages.

Books were my recreation; and reflection was the only physician I ever needed (for, thank heaven, all my indispositions were but the effects of an extravagant sensibility); my life was not so full of felicity as to make me very careful of it; and so I rode into action, with some speculative acquaintance with war, a body capable of enduring fatigue, and a heart that feared not death. After one of the severest engagements in which our regiment had shared, so many of the principal officers were killed or wounded, that it became my lot, to head a squadron. By this fortunate chance (having dauntless Hungarians to command, and happily succeeding in a hazardous attempt, which dislodged the enemy from a very important position) I attracted the favour of Marshal Wurmser; and the bravery of my gallant countrymen, thus obtained for me the command of a troop”

“No disqualifying, Charles!” interrupted Demetrius. “If your hazardous attempt had not been well planned, and likely to succeed, even success would not have saved you from censure. I have learnt enough of military rules, to know that in these cases, a man must never act but upon probabilities. The courage of soldiers, is only a powerful machine, which depends for its usefulness on the hand that directs it: and for this reason, public opinion is not unjust, when it decrees superior glory, to commanders.”

“Bravo!” cried Charles, “your remark is right, and its application so flattering to your brother, that he will not endeavour to disprove it. To proceed, therefore. From this period I was frequently entrusted with the execution of partial attacks, observations, *etc. etc.* which good fortune enabled me to accomplish fully: and having been so lucky as to propose and effect the recapture of a lieutenant-general, who had been surprised by a roving party of French chasseurs, I secured him my friend, and in the year ninety five, went with him to join the imperial army in Italy.

It was at the close of the foregoing year, when I was lying ill of a flesh wound, got in the skirmish with the chasseurs, and which for some days, I had not been able to attend to, that I first received a letter from my unknown. Here it is you may read it, —

TO COUNT LEOPOLSTAT.

While a whole army are loud in the praises of a young man, not yet one and twenty; while the consciousness of desert, intoxicates his senses, and perhaps threatens to make him an arrogant character for life; will he condescend to reflect on the anonymous tribute of mingled caution and eulogium, presented in this letter, by an obscure individual?

It was my fortune to hear of you, continually, during the last campaigns; I heard of you, not merely as a gallant soldier, but as one, who in spite of misfortune, nobly supported his nobility; and extorted that consideration by his virtues, which does not often fall to the share of any but the fortunate.

Your character delighted me — your situation interested me and I have ever since, followed all your actions, with the most watchful solicitude. In the late exploit (where with a handful of men, you so completely routed a strong detachment, and not only restored an experienced officer to the service, but preserved the plans of attack which he had about him, from falling into the power of the enemy), you added a new motive for that admiration, which I am romantic enough, thus to acknowledge.

So anxious am I, to see you persevere in the magnanimous course of strict integrity which you now tread, that I cannot forbear from thus telling you, that even the most dissolute breathes your name with respect, the most virtuous with enthusiasm and should you lay aside your self-denial with your obscurity, your modesty with your neglect, believe me, you may fight like a lion, and you will only

“Light a torch to show your shame the more”

Apostates from propriety, like apostates from religion, are ever more abhorred than such as never made a profession of either. Continue then, to think and act as you now do; new virtues will, in that case, spring up from new circumstances; and you will remain a memorable instance of sensibility without weakness, valour without rashness, success without insolence, youth without error, graces without vanity, and excellence without enemies.

Farewell

“With this epistle” resumed Charles, “came a valuable collection of books and maps; all that you see there, bound so gaily in crimson and gold: they are, indeed, a complete library for a soldier; some very scarce, all very useful.

“ I should dissemble unwarrantably,” he added (as his brother eagerly asked what impression the letter made upon his feelings); “I should falsify truth most notoriously, if I did not own, that it conjured up a good deal of vanity in me. I read it over and over again, and always with the hope of finding some new

reason for concluding it to be the production of a woman. To be sure, there was not a single woman whom I wished it to come from; yet was I puppy enough to desire that there might be some charming creature vastly in love with me, whom I might discover, and love in return, with my whole heart.”

“Nothing could be so natural — nothing could be so natural” repeated Demetrius, with an ardent sigh. “If it had been me, I should have died of impatience to discover her. What a soul! What sensibility to excellence! What judicious admonitions!”

“Ah! It was those,” answered Charles, “that first taught me to suspect that I was deluding myself: the chances were three to four against any young woman in love dictating such a rational epistle. Few persons in love have the sanity to believe, and the courage to tell its object, that they imagine it possible for him to fall short of perfection. I therefore abandoned the solitary post of ‘I am romantic enough’ (in which I had, at first, most obstinately entrenched this vain opinion), and betook myself to take the writer’s counsel, instead of agitating my heart with unavailing conjectures.

Immediately after this incident, I went to Italy, where I became acquainted with a Saxon officer, who was destined to traverse most of my views.

“Joseph Wurtzburg was two or three years my senior; and, without talents of any kind, burnt to be distinguished. As this desire of distinction had its source in a grasping churlishness, which would willingly have admitted no sharer in the distribution of worldly honours, so was it totally incapable of comprehending the real value of actions; learning to estimate them solely by public praise or public blame. He lived, wishing to be everything, yet becoming nothing.

“By turns, you saw him consumed with a gnawing, desire of supplanting a man in the heart of his mistress, or being pronounced a finer figure than his companions, a better dancer, deeper thinker, more active officer; in short, there was nothing too high, nor too low, for his covetous temper to think above, or beneath its reach.

“Envy, like a cankerworm, ate into his very heart: those who knew him slightly, called him a gay, good kind of fellow; such as observed him closely, perceived in him the forced levity of a man, in continual ill-humour with himself. I do verily believe, that for himself he united the two extremes of love and hatred; and preposterously wishing for superiority in all points over others (for which nature had completely unfitted him), neglected the only point in which perhaps he might have shined — yet, heaven knows, what that was!

“Being thrown much together in our military stations, he and I became acquainted; and from the very first moment, I saw he eyed me with dislike. So little did I then dream of the existence of such a character as Wurtzburg’s, that I imputed this dislike to something amiss in myself; and the next time we met, endeavoured to appear as sociable as I felt. Nothing altered him; he constantly

looked at me with detestation, and spoke to me with bitterness: yet so, that without drawing upon myself the charge of irritability, I could not notice his conduct.

“The fact was, that, as the veteran officers on the Rhine (thinking a little exaggerated praise might urge me forward to really meritorious achievements) had said far more of me than I deserved. Wurtzburg hated before he saw me: the happy auspices under which I joined the troops in Italy completed this aversion.

“Fortune still favoured me. I continued to obtain the approbation of my generals, and saw myself approaching that promotion for which I panted, simply, because from that alone I could expect opportunities of trying those speculative experiments, from which I hoped my country might reap solid advantage. But here Wurtzburg stepped in, like my evil genius, and for a while darkened my prospects.

“The general, whose liberty I had preserved, and upon whose friendship I had been taught to reckon so confidently, was a relation of Wurtzburg’s. He was a well-meaning, weak-headed man; and I quickly perceived that his commendations of me grew every day cooler, his zeal for my advancement slackened; till, at length, he ceased to distinguish me from any other person.

“You are well acquainted with the disasters which befel the Austrian army in the campaign of ninety six. My brain maddens, when I remember the thousands of gallant soldiers that were absolutely sacrificed by the insanity of General Argenteau: but, thank Heaven, though I shared in the misfortunes of the battle of Montenotte, I escaped its disgrace.

“I was in the division commanded by Lieutenant-General Provera; that brave division which, forgotten by the flying Argenteau, was left in the midst of a victorious enemy, without a chance of succour, relying solely upon its own energy.

“During two nights after the engagement of the main armies, the intrepid Provera endeavoured to effect a retreat by crossing the Bormida; but that river was so swollen by heavy rains, that its passage was impossible; and he therefore came to the resolution of fortifying his little army among the ruins of an old fortress, on a neighbouring mountain. There, for two days and nights, completely encircled by the republicans, without provisions of any kind, nay, even without water, and almost hopeless of assistance, we repulsed the assailants. They had insolently summoned us to surrender at discretion; but after having been thrice beaten back with horrid slaughter, and lost three of their generals, they allowed us terms; and we surrendered prisoners of war.

“This removal of me, was, I am certain, a sincere pleasure to Wurtzburg; but he was not long suffered to enjoy it: we were exchanged, and as every individual of the brave Provera’s brigade partook of the honour due chiefly to himself, I was again congratulated by my brother officers.

“You wonder, perhaps, at my using the word congratulated; yet I have not misused it. Success is not the test of honourable exertion; and a handful of troops, abandoned, isolated in the midst of an army surrounding them on all sides, like the waves of the sea — an army which they baffled, in spite of famine and despair, was, in the eyes of all Europe, an object of respect and admiration. No, Demetrius, I would not give one leaf from the hard earned laurels of that memorable time, for all the blood-stained wreaths that may hereafter cover the shame of rebels and usurpers.

“No sooner had I rejoined the army, than Wurtzburg came again in contact with me, by his being placed in the same brigade, which was sent to strengthen the garrison of Mantua. About this period, I received a second letter from my unknown; together with the fine ruby, now upon my finger: it is exquisitely cut, and would be inestimable to me, were it only for its representing the great Gonsalvo.

LETTER TO COUNT LEOPOLSTAT.

“I hasten to send you a trifling testimony of the increasing esteem with which I consider you; though I have been so long silent, I have not thought of you the less. Accept this ring, for the sake of one to whom your virtues have endeared you; not your graceful person, nor still more graceful accomplishments: these can have no weight with me (though I confess myself so silly as to set some value upon a pleasing exterior), since I never have seen you. “Whenever you look on the head which enriches this gem, let the noble character which made it thus admirable, refresh and animate your present virtues. Like his, your gallant acquirements have already obtained for you, the title of ‘Prince of the Youth’; and like his, your continued magnanimity will ensure to you the name of a hero.*

“Your course in Italy has been uniformly as bright as my heart predicted. I have many military connections ; and from them have heard instances of your humanity, far more affecting than all the exploits of valour.

* Gonsalvo di Cordova, justly denominated the Great, was one of the most celebrated generals of his time. Nature, while forming him, employed so many magnanimous qualities in his composition, that she left no room for weakness. In the midst of a brilliant military career, during which he had achieved the important conquest of Naples, he was suddenly recalled to Spain by an ungrateful master, who envied him that love and admiration, which he suspected might one day be employed for the purposes of traitorous ambition. Disappointed in a long promised honour, and cruelly neglected, Gonsalvo retired to Loxa, where he devoted himself to the study of elegant literature, and the practice of every domestic virtue. At this period, he was consulted by Cardinal Ximenes, upon an expedition to Africa against the Moors. It was then that Gonsalvo proved himself a hero: forgetting private wrongs, in zeal for public good, he roused every power of his soul to produce a plan which was to crown another with glory; he recommended the only general likely to rival his own fame; and when success had consummated the dazzling enterprise, from the depths of solitude he listened with patriotic joy to the shouts of popular applause, greeting his fortunate competitor.

“Amiable Leopolstat! Ever be true to your own principles, and you will carry with you into every situation, the prayers and blessings of such as love goodness Adieu.”

“Say what you please, my dear Charles,” exclaimed Demetrius, “yet I’ll maintain this sweet, sermonizing epistolarian to be a woman; and if you ever fall in love with any one else, I shall think you have a heart like a bullet.”

“That would be passing a terribly unjust sentence upon my character,” returned his brother: “my heart is indeed touched with very tender gratitude towards this supposed fair; but as I really cannot persuade myself to become certain that my anonymous is a woman — a young, amiable, delightful woman, I may, per chance, dispose of my affections, after all, in favour of some charming reality. How ever, to satisfy you, my dear boy, I will own, that always after receiving these letters, I thought for many weeks of nothing but their writer; wearied my brain with conjectures of who it was, and where they were; and never met a pair of fine eyes looking at me, without momentarily believing that they belonged to my correspondent.

“In Mantua, where I was shut up for eight months, I thought I had at last discovered my incognita. This lady was a young widow, the niece of the chief ecclesiastic there, and having been early married to a Neapolitan officer, who soon died, had returned to live with her family.

“She was at this time about five and twenty, elegant rather than handsome, and exquisitely accomplished. From the moment she distinguished me by particular notice, Wurtzburg fell *enormously* in love with her: it was amusing to see the little contemptible tricks which he used to supplant me, and the arts he essayed to prepossess me against her. Had I been attached to Signora Berghi, such conduct would have exasperated me; as it was, I laughed at him.

“The uncommon information and delightful conversational talent of this charming woman, beguiled most of the tedious hours, which made up the days, and weeks, and months, wasted in Mantua. I felt a sort of homelike affection for her, and was accustomed to talk with her as with a sister.

“Hitherto, I had never attributed her unrivalled kindness to any other account than a sympathy in our tastes and opinions; but one evening, after an interesting discussion of military events (for she was surprisingly skilled on this subject), I was accompanying her voice in a favourite song, when finding her hesitate, I looked up, and met her eye, as it rested upon my ring with a very agitated expression; she blushed excessively, and stammering out an excuse, retreated from the instrument. “At that instant, I scarcely knew whether I was rejoiced or disappointed: to say the truth, I believe I was the latter; for Signora Berghi, with all her excellencies, was not precisely such as a young man of two-and-twenty would wish to find an incognita. This blush, however, was convincing. Without taking time to deliberate, and in such a hurry of spirits that I forgot all caution, I followed her to a sofa, respectfully took her hand in mine, exclaiming — ‘Have I then learned from that amiable blush, what you

have hitherto so cruelly concealed from me? — what I have so long panted to discover! And may I now dare to assure you, that your goodness — your approbation —’

“Here I lost myself, for I felt as if I ought to have been rather more ardent in my gratitude to a charming woman.

“Signora Berghi, who could only understand from this that I was in love with her, and had interpreted her blush into a mutual passion, became really beautiful with various emotions, that, embellishing her cheeks and eyes, gave to her whole figure an air of the most touching sensibility: she trembled, sighed, averted her face, and withdrawing her hand, said, softly — ‘And have you indeed wished for this discovery? Till now, I feared that you set no value on my esteem.’

‘How could you wrong me so? Was it possible for me to read such pure and admirable sentiments; to know myself so partially considered; to wear this sweet remembrancer, and yet not languish to discover the sex and character of my invisible friend, my guardian angel ?

“I stopped, but received no answer. A deadly paleness succeeded those rich colours which but the instant before had animated her countenance. She pushed me from her, faintly exclaiming, ‘Ah, there is some fatal mistake !’ While she spoke, she fell senseless on the ground.”

Here Count Leopoldstat sighed repeatedly; and Demetrius, observing his brother’s eyes swimming in tears, cast down his. Charles then proceeded.

“When she recovered, she earnestly demanded an explanation; and as indeed I had already gone too far to recede, I frankly told her the history of my ring. At its conclusion she wept some time without speaking; at length, still keeping her eyes fixed on the floor, she said, with the most affecting gentleness, ‘Surely you will be generous enough to acquit me of a forward affection (even though I have thus explicitly shown how dear you are to me), when I solemnly protest I am not that happy person, so deservedly interesting; and that, consequently, I could find in your first address only the declaration of a mutual preference. Oh, Count Leopoldstat, when we are separated for ever, think of me, not as an indelicate, but too ingenuous woman, whose heart had yielded to your virtues, and now tears itself from them eternally, with the agonies of death!’

“The agonies of death did indeed sit on her pale face, as breaking through my now clasping arms, and gasping convulsively, she rushed out of the apartment. I could not suffer her to leave me thus; but following, and conjuring her to hear me a single instant, at length almost carried her back.

“It would have been criminal in me to have deceived her: I therefore candidly explained what my feelings had been towards her; what they now were (for they were tender beyond all expression, and my looks must have been faithless to my soul, if they did not express that tenderness) : but it was in vain that I talked to her of love; she answered, that I mistook pity for preference; that though she

believed my pity was ever accompanied with respect, and far tenderer than the love of most other men; though it might make her happy, it would not render myself so. She therefore resigned me to the mysterious and, she hoped, fortunate lot, which seemed destined for me.

“I will not weary your attention, my brother, with all the arguments which, during several interviews, I used to this eccentric, admirable woman, but proceed to tell you, that as every interview displayed more accurately the delicacy and sweetness of her character, I became so truly attached to her, so grieved at her incredulity, that I fell ill; and the physician pronouncing the disorder to be on my mind, she was induced to credit my protestations, and blessed me by saying so. Of course, my recovery was immediate”

“But how came she to blush, when you caught her eyeing the ring ?” said Demetrius. “ I do suspect, in spite of all her assertions —”

“You are mistaken then,” interrupted his brother. “Wurtzburg, who found out her preference for me, long ere I suspected it myself, desirous, I presume, to have me considered as under engagements to some other woman, had censured my reserve, and instanced its folly, by my making a mystery of such a trifle as a ring. Of this ring, he said, he had often asked me in vain; adding, that it was most likely the gift of some fair favourite, which solved the riddle of my extreme coldness in praising all other women. During my indisposition, this silly fellow made a passionate declaration to Signora Berghi, which she silenced by declaring our engagements: from that instant, his animosity knew no bounds.”

“Well, but, proceed Charles, tell me, how it happens that you have not married this amiable creature ?”

Charles now turned very pale; he averted his head, and said, in a suffocated voice, “She was taken from me by death.” He then rose, walked to a window, and remained there a long time in silence: when he quitted it, his eyes were heavy and swollen, and the smile which he forced to his lips, parted them but for an instant. “I’ll finish my story another time,” he said, hastily (brushing off with his hand the tears that gathered afresh in his eyes); “let us have a walk.”

Demetrius, without trusting his voice to reply (for sorrow is contagious), rose quickly, and tossing his hair into a thicker shade over his brow, as he put on his hat, followed his brother into the street.

CHAPTER III

The next time in which the brothers breakfasted alone, Charles resumed his narrative.

“When I was first suffered to avow myself the lover of Signora Berghi, the situation of Mantua, grew every day more critical: Marshal Wurmser having imprudently thrown himself into that half-famished city, with twenty thousand fresh troops, was now, after four months defence, reduced to extremities: each attempt made by the allies, to raise the blockade, had failed: we saw ourselves on the point of either perishing with hunger, or disgracefully capitulating. A dreadful fever raged in the garrison; we were obliged constantly to break the the formidable cordon of the enemy, merely to obtain a few provisions, which the environs soon ceased to afford us; and we were fast sinking into despair, when General Provera with a small force, arrived before the French lines.

“As the command of foraging parties had often been entrusted to me, and as I was therefore, thought capable of executing a difficult enterprise, with some presence of mind, it fell to my share, to convey intelligence from the Marshal, to General Provera. At some risk, this was effected: and the service being deemed important, both generals promised, unsolicited, that their representations to the Emperor, should obtain for me, the grand cross of Maria Theresa.

“During this short absence from Mantua, my poor Leonora, (whom I had left ill of the fatal fever; and from whom I parted with a foreboding heart) grew rapidly worse; and living only to hear that I had succeeded; that the relief of Mantua was almost certain; that her Charles was about to receive an honourable testimony of his zeal for the service, expired in my arms.

“The day was just dawning, Demetrius! When the tumult of musquetry, shouts, and shrieks, announced the hour of the sortie. What were all the emotions of my life, to that which I felt then? — my character, my honour, my duty, my future peace, were all at stake! If I were absent, I should be disgraced for ever — if I joined my regiment, the woman I loved, would die deserted! —

“ This distracting conflict, did not continue long: her last sigh struck my ear, and her cold hand suddenly dropped mine. What I felt, what I did at that agonising moment, I know not: I remember nothing, till a loud burst of artillery, succeeded by cries of frightful surprise, recalled me to the consciousness of holding her dear body, fast locked in my arms: I pressed it several times to my overcharged heart; motioned for her wretched uncle to receive the precious burthen; and then hurried like a madman into the thick of the engagement.

“Conceive my horror, when I found that I had been repeatedly called for, by my commanding officer; that my squadron was already engaged; and that our cause was desperate!

“During the night, General Bonaparte, (receiving intelligence of Provera's destination:) had followed him with the utmost celerity, and was now united with the blockading army. What a scene of slaughter ensued! We were in despair — the enemy, confident: and it was not till the unfortunate, astonished Provera, (obliged to submit to an unforeseen superiority) had surrendered his remaining soldiers, that we relinquished the contest.

“We were again shut up in Mantua; before which, a victorious and immense force, was now consolidated.

“No sooner did I lay down my arms, and thought to have had a short interval that I might dedicate to the memory of one, whom I shall never forget — O never, never! — than I was summoned to a court martial, and charged with desertion from my post, on the morning of the 14th. My enemies (who seized this occasion) were indefatigable in exciting suspicions of my fidelity; and they so artfully had weaved truth with falsehood in their accusations, that for many hours, my very life seemed at the hazard. — But my defence was so simple and sincere; the circumstances of my case, were so affecting and peculiar; my attachment to the general cause, so well ascertained (by the eminent risks I had run to prosper it, the day before), that the sentence passed, was comparatively lenient. I was suspended from all rank, for six ensuing months, and my claim to the Order of Merit, no longer allowed.”

“O Heavens !” exclaimed Demetrius, “How were you able to bear this? — did you not shut yourself up from every living creature, and almost break your heart, with grief and shame?”

“No Demetrius — had I deserved censure, I should have sunk under it: — but I knew that every honest heart would acquit me of an intentional breach of duty. Even my judges, pronounced sentence with regret, upon a man, faint with fatigue and anguish, and covered with wounds got in the very scene he was accused of having wilfully deserted. — Commiseration from every auditor followed my sentence: and perhaps your persecuted brother was never so praised, so pitied, so esteemed, as at the instant in which his enemies hoped to have effected his ruin.

“Before I left the court, I requested permission to serve in the ranks as volunteer, which was granted me, with great emotion, by the venerable Field Marshal. Since then, he has assured me, that my colonel would have feigned ignorance of my temporary absence, had he not been vehemently pressed with the charge of partiality, by two or three officers; who at length forced him to demand a court martial. The names of these officers, I could never learn: but my suspicions, perhaps unjustly, fell principally upon Wurtzburg.

“The surrender of Mantua shortly after this period, separated me entirely, from this cold-blooded fellow. The terms of our capitulation were such as ought to have been demanded by a veteran like Marshal Wurmser; and indeed, his gallant defence and venerable character, wrested admiration from the enemy.

“Deprived of all military rank, I joined the army of the Archduke Charles. That young Prince was now come from fields of immortal glory in Germany, to repair, if possible, the errors or misfortunes of the commanders in Italy. Alas! this was not to be done: even by him. The French, (under a man, who has all the talents but none of the virtues of a general, who violates treaties and neutralities without regard to the law of nations) were in possession of every important fortress; and nothing was left the Archduke but a resolution to defend the passes into Germany, with obstinate bravery. His line for this purpose, was drawn from the Grisons to the sea; it was linked together by a chain of posts, which formed a barrier between the enemy, and the remainder of our army, then cantoned in Friuli and Carinthia. I had always languished to serve under the Archduke, and I was now insensible to every other desire in this world, save that of gloriously effacing hard disgrace.

“In the sanguinary action of Tarvisio I was so fortunate as to find myself in the heat of battle, by the side of my General, at the very moment in which his horse was shot under him: I instantly threw myself from mine; and while he mounted, disabled a French dragoon, whose sabre was raised to cut him down. The Prince saw the action; and exclaiming — ‘My brave fellow, I will not forget you.’ — charged furiously through the field.

“He kept his word. When the engagement was over, he enquired for the hussar, to whom he generously declared himself indebted for life; and recognising him in me, promised to promote me to a majority, so soon as the period of my suspension from military rank should be rigidly fulfilled.

“The decrees of courts martial, are never to be reversed; and I know that severe justice demanded some expiation of my offence. At the end of the time I speak of, I was restored to my former station; and immediately afterwards was presented by the Prince with a major's commission, and the Order which I now wear. Ah! How did the sight of it, wring my heart! When it was first promised me — Leonora, the tender Leonora — but why do I thus recall her! —

“ When our troops were in the neighbourhood of Hundsmark, the wife and niece of Baron Ingersdorf were on the point of falling into the enemy's hands. A dangerous illness had confined the Baroness some weeks to her country house; and the march of both armies was too rapid, to allow her attendants time to learn the necessity of removal. Prince Charles, anxious to preserve these ladies from the horror of captivity, strenuously urged the Baroness to quit the place in a litter, and to trust herself to the protection of a troop of hussars, which I offered to conduct — His advice was gratefully accepted: and after a swift journey, during which we had a sharp contest with a party of French horse, we had the happiness of delivering our fair charges, into the hands of the Baron himself. From that hour, he became my sincerest friend.”

“I hear nothing of your anonymous, all this while!” cried the impatient Demetrius.

“True,” replied Charles, “I neglected to tell you, that when I was in Mantua, and immediately after quitting it, I received two letters: it will be as well not to read the last now. The subject is a sad one: yet the manner in which it is alluded to, does honour to the writer's heart, and soothed mine. — I was too unhappy a man, at that time, to require caution against folly; and the Unknown tenderly forbore from saying any thing that was foreign to my grief. However, I was strengthened under mortification and sorrow, by receiving an assurance in this letter, that my extraordinary situation, and the sentence of the court martial, were the talk of all Vienna; and that so far from suffering by such discussion, I became interesting to every one. —

“Here is the singular epistle, which reached me in Mantua just before my heavy loss.”

Demetrius perused its contents with surprise.

TO COUNT LEOPOLSTAT.

‘Only a few weeks ago, it was my intention to have made myself known, at this period; but an unforeseen, perplexing circumstance, delays this discovery, and you are now on the point perhaps of destroying my dearest views.

‘I hear you are going to marry. — If it be true, and if the happy woman, be as deserving of your heart, as report says she is, I will stifle that selfish regret which I am too honest to deny feeling. —

‘Disappointed as I am, I promise to disclose myself hereafter: and ever, ever to remain your friend, though deprived of all hope of becoming your —.’

“A most singular letter indeed!” he exclaimed “What did you think of it Charles?” —

“I scarcely know what,” returned his brother; “it seemed to me, as if the fair writer had designed me the honour of her hand; and yet I could hardly reconcile such an explicit declaration, with my ideas of female delicacy.

“I certainly revolved the subject over, many times, with great anxiety, and I fear, also, with some regret, that this discovery had been so long delayed. I will not dissemble with you Demetrius — (though at the time, I certainly deceived myself) Signora Berghi, amiable, accomplished, as she was, did not warm my heart, to that delightful excess, I knew it capable of.

“My nature is, I think, inaccessible to vanity; but it is weakly tender; and no virtuous woman ever loved me yet, without creating in me so much gratitude, as to make me a little in love with her.

“Had Providence destined me to be the husband of Leonora, I should have spent my life happily with her; yet not so happily as I might have done with some other woman — this incognita perhaps.”

“This incognita, I hope,” said Demetrius, “she must, she shall reward you, at last. If she prove of great rank, extraordinary rank, as I suspect, you may easily account for her romantic frankness.

“You smile — well — go on with your narration.”

“I have little more to say of the campaign,” resumed Charles: “while the commissioners were treating for peace at Leoben, the armies lay nearly inactive; and before the end of the year ninety seven, the definitive treaty released us from severe discipline: after which, I repaired to Vienna.

“Attracted by every thing estimable — and delightful, I had often visited Baron Ingersdorf’s house, when one morning after breakfast, he thus addressed me.

“ ‘You and I, my dear Count, are now sufficiently acquainted to waive all ceremony; I therefore freely tell you, that I am peculiarly interested in your future fortune; and having some influence, pledge myself, from this hour, to serve you in any one way which you can point out, or I accomplish. My wife and niece owe you everlasting thanks; and it must now be my task to prove that we all think so; though never with the hope of liquidating our debt.’

“I was going to protest against this exaggeration of a simple act of military duty, when he interrupted me.

“ ‘Come, come, you must allow me to be a fairer judge of your merits and demerits than yourself. I have canvassed the latter for some weeks, and do not find them so very frightful as to prevent me from saying, henceforth use this house as if it were the house of your nearest relative; make it your home, whenever such a home seems agreeable; and rely upon a friendship, which, having gratitude and esteem for its basis, will never fail you, unless they perish’

“What was said by me, in reply to such undeserved goodness, I know not; but I did stammer out a heap of tumultuous expressions, proving that oratory, at least, was not among my qualifications.

“The Baron reassured me, by cordially pressing my hand. ‘There is one thing more I have to add,’ he continued : ‘you are young, and probably susceptible; my niece, good and beautiful; if you see her often, and discover those endearing virtues which are too much obscured by invincible diffidence, you may perchance fall in love with her: it is this I would warn you against’

“ Here my indignant features became scarlet; the Baron, without allowing me time to speak, hastened on. ‘I see you misunderstand me. Believe me, there is not a man in the world to whom I would so joyfully give Adelaide as yourself; but she is not mine to give. When Adelaide was quite a child, her mother died;

after which event, my poor brother, who is one of the best men in life, and one of the strangest, found consolation in nothing but his affection for this girl. She was educated in the convent of which our sister is abbess; and never quitted that retirement till a month, before you saw her. My brother, whose estate in Bavaria joins the lands of the convent, had been so accustomed to the society of his daughter, that it was with difficulty she obtained his leave to become my wife's nurse, when the physician ordered her to Hundsmark, and with still greater difficulty obtained permission to winter it with us here. This concession was made by him, after having premised several restrictions; the principal of which is — a careful watch over her heart. Adelaide has been engaged, from the age of fifteen, to the son of a man, from whom my brother professes to have received the most signal service. Of course, we should not interfere with a parent's views; and Adelaide is herself too warmly attached to her father, and too strict in her notions of duty and delicacy, to make me afraid of trusting her, even with you, after my having thus appealed to your honour.

“Perhaps this may be a useless, and therefore tedious, detail to you, my dear Leopold; yet my conscience would not have been quiet, had I not made it. I have uniformly reprobated those parents and guardians, who permit complete intimacy between amiable young people, and then are enraged at finding mutual good qualities have produced mutual affection; and I am consequently bound to avoid the conduct which I censure’

“How just are your conclusions! How admirable your sentiments, my dear lord!’ I exclaimed, charmed with his generous frankness, ‘this is the strongest proof you have yet given me of your friendship. Be assured, that even were I not what I am — a poor soldier of fortune; such benevolent anxiety for my peace would not be lost on me. As it is: my peculiar destiny renders presumption impossible yet Mam'selle de Ingersdorf is not to be beheld with indifference’

“At the latter part of my speech, the Baron laughed so heartily, that he utterly disconcerted me — ‘I see you are to be trusted!’ he cried with his usual gaiety, that grave cold compliment, so awkwardly delivered, convinces me, that my poor Adelaide would have stood no chance at any rate; — that, if she gives her heart to you, after all, it will be unsought even by a single civil sigh. Well! 'tis all as it should be: learn now to treat her as a sister; and her attentive kindness (being no longer liable to misinterpretation) will soon prove to you, that her uncle is not partial.’ — here ended our discourse. —

“From this period Baron Ingersdorf constantly treated me with the most flattering regard, consulted me on his own private concerns; and learnt from me in return, the history of my life. He is now engaged in an endeavour to restore us part of our lost inheritance, which he suspects to be reclaimable: and it is to him, that we are indebted for almost every valuable connection we possess in Vienna.”

“And pray what has become of that vile wretch Wurtzburg?” asked, Demetrius.

Charles smiled: “ I hope he is undeserving of such a decisive epithet as that. You must remember, Demetrius, that all the malice I have perhaps too hastily laid to his charge, was never proved: the evidence was merely presumptive. Possibly a year may have wrought wonderful alteration in him; for I met him unexpectedly, two days ago, as I was passing Prince Eugene’s palace, and he returned my salutation with such politeness that it amazed me. Some person told me since, that he has got the command of a regiment.” —

“A regiment! Such a churl have a regiment?” — vehemently interrupted Demetrius — “but hang him! What is it to us? — Do let me read that letter again the last, I mean: — my dear Charles, I’ll keep such a lookout for you! It will be impossible for me to see your incognita without knowing her by instinct. ‘The tenderest of hearts,’ — Ah! That is her’s of course — what a sweet woman!”

“It is not my intention to fall in love as monarchs marry, by proxy” said his brother, “therefore my good boy, let me beseech you not to volunteer so very useless a service.

“Come — we have talked away half the morning, and have not yet paid our respects at M. de Ingersdorf’s.” Demetrius snatched up his hat, seized Charles by the arm, and hurried him along the streets with as much rapidity as he harangued.