

CHAPTER IX

In returning to take a short review of the elder Count Leopold, it will not be necessary to say more of his military operations, than that he rejoined the Archduke in the middle of August; proceeded with him into the Palatinate; bore a distinguished part in the brilliant affairs at Neckerau and Mannheim; and was with him on the skirts of the Black Forest, when the disastrous reverses in Switzerland, and the impossibility of making a winter campaign among its masses of ice, checked the triumph of success.

In the lively interest excited by these events, and the important views which Charles often warmly opened of the future, forgot his own private attachments to the irreproachable Prince under whom he served, as well as to their just cause, his mind entered with earnestness into that Prince's councils. Demetrius, acquiring honour, and restored to cheerfulness, was a soothing object for this mind to rest on: it was "the soft green of his soul," to which it turned, after political speculations, that both wearied and alarmed.

Adelaide Ingersdorf was still remembered: no cares, no occupations could drive her from his heart, though they often succeeded in banishing her awhile from his memory.

In her, he had found every quality, desired by a taste and a sensibility, which some persons might have termed fastidious. With an understanding cultivated beyond her sex; a heart softly tempered, yet yielding only to the hand of Reason; a beauty made more captivating by elegant accomplishments, she was modest even to bashfulness: Charles prized her for this fault; and had often (while seeing her shrink from the assiduity of admissible admiration) said to himself — "How few women there are, that, capable of charming all men, are content with endearing themselves to one only!"

Among the romantic splendour of Switzerland, he had sighed for her: and now, on the shores of the Rhine, where more leisure allowed him to muse over the past, he sunk into a sadness, of which he was himself scarcely conscious.

He was one night sitting over a book (of which, certainly, he had not read a single syllable) when his servant brought him a letter. It was from his incognita. The calmness with which he opened it, quickly vanished.

A few lines, appointing a meeting, made his heart palpitate with expectation: now was going to be developed that mystery, which had for five years given him both pain and pleasure. Yet what could he hope from it, when his affections were unalienably fixed upon another, and this generous unknown evidently relied on obtaining them? — at any rate, he thought curiosity would be relieved; and perhaps a candid explanation of his situation, might secure to him the friendship of one, who seemed formed for a noble disinterested sentiment.

Till this moment arrived, Charles never imagined it would agitate him. Whether saddened spirits had affected his nerves ; or whether he unconsciously hoped to find in his incognita one that would at last reconcile him to the loss of Adelaide, is uncertain; but agitated he was, beyond all description.

He could not sleep once through the whole night: and the next day, went over the routine of his usual employments, with amind completely *distract*.

The night was bright and calm (though November was far advanced) when Charles mounted his horse at the specified hour, and took the road to the chateau of a neighbouring Canon, where his rendezvous was appointed.

Three miles, seemed thirty, as he galloped over them; and yet, when he reached the place, it appeared to him as if he had flown! His heart now palpitated with such violence, that he almost wished for a respite from what he once passionately desired.

A servant received him at the gate; and upon hearing his name, bowed respectfully, and led him across a hall. He then threw open the door of a room, which Charles entered, and beheld Marshal Ingersdorf.

The expression of the veteran's countenance, would not suffer him to believe the meeting accidental: a multitude of hopes and fears, wild and delightful, electrified him at the sight. He was unable to speak or to move. The Marshal rushed forwards, and with his usual impetuosity caught him in his arms, vehemently exclaiming, "My dear Leopolstat! — My friend! — My son! If you will become so."

"Am I so happy," cried Charles (scarcely trusting his bewildered senses) "am I so happy as to find my incognito in Marshal Ingersdorf!"

"Yes! — Yes!" resumed the Marshal, repeatedly squeezing his hand, you see that will-o'-the-wisp, now before you. — Only tell me that you forgive my eccentric impertinence; and that you will allow me to dispose of your heart and yourself?"

"O Sir! O Heaven what am I to think — what hope?" — exclaimed Charles, sinking involuntarily upon one knee.

His fine face and eyes, brightly flushed with doubtful joy, were now raised to the Marshal: the latter gazed on him, with overflowing delight.

"I know you love," he cried, "I know you would have chosen Adelaide, had she beenborn a beggar : she is yours then. I meant her for you all along. Forsheim is a worthy lad — he knew my scheme."

The old gentleman could hardly articulate these abrupt sentences, from excess of pleasure. Leopolstat was quite overpowered: he felt like a man who after living half a century in a dungeon, is suddenly brought into daylight. In

silence, eloquent silence, he pressed the shaking hands of the Marshal to his lips and breast: the first words he uttered were an anxious inquiry of Adelaide's sentiments.

Marshal Ingersdorf was then going to hurry forth an animated assurance of her attachment; when suddenly recollecting what was due to female delicacy, he said archly — "She don't hate you, that's all: — whether she likes you or not, I leave you to discover, the first time you are alone together. But come, rise from the ground, which the knee of a soldier should never touch, but to his Maker. Let us sit down and talk over the matter: you must long to hear my reasons."

"I do long, Sir," returned the fluttered Charles, and his eager soul, sprung to Adelaide. To throw himself at her feet, (spite of her father's remark) to pour out all the tenderness which he had hitherto so painfully restrained, to receive from her lips the confirmation of what her downcast eyes had so often told him, was now his liveliest emotion; he scarcely wanted explanations, while certain that the mystery had terminated in rapture.

His animated glances were constantly directed towards the door, as if in search of her.

"I see what you are thinking about:" resumed the veteran, "and to quiet you, protest that my daughter is not in this house. Tomorrow morning she will be here, with my good host's sister."

"Tomorrow morning!" — repeated Charles, and away flew his thoughts again, from the Marshal's explanations, with more than their former rapidity.

"I am likely to have but a sorry auditor in you," cried Ingersdorf, "why you puppy, what sort of a gratitude is this? After all the pains and vexations I have encountered to keep this girl secluded, ever since she was fifteen, only to fall in love with you, am I not to be gratified with a patient hearing of the only romance I ever concocted in my life?"

"Pardon me — pardon me, dearest Sir!" replied Charles, glowing with graceful confusion; "I have indeed shamefully forgotten to thank you, for such unmerited, transporting goodness! — How could I have become thus interesting to you? — How is it possible, that such a treasure has been long destined for me?"

"Both these *hows*, I'll answer satisfactorily," returned the Marshal, "if you will only gag yourself, with a little composure. Zounds! You are as talkative now, as you were mute a few minutes ago! Can you be silent? Can your thoughts leave off chattering to one another? Can you listen calmly?"

"Willingly, Sir, most willingly," was the reply of Leopoldstat, though his kindling eyes and throbbing pulse refused to sanction this promise. The Marshal saw his agitation, with complacent satisfaction: but without noticing it

further, filled out two bumpers of Burgundy, and pledging his intended son in one of them, began his rambling oration.

“The first time I heard of you, was in the year ninety four, at a little inn, in Alsace. I was returning from headquarters, where I had been to visit my old friend Wurmser, when alighting for some refreshment, I found all the inhabitants of the village, discussing the merits of a young officer, who had just passed through with a detachment.

“It had happened, that a merciless steward was at that very moment, dragging to prison a poor farmer, whom sickness and accidents had made incapable of paying his rent; and whose wife and children he had already turned out of doors.

“You remember the circumstance,” added the Marshal, seeing Charles about to interrupt him; “but I’ll not be broken in on. I heard that he had learned the particulars, and unable to produce the exact sum, himself, had borrowed part from his Captain. Well may the drops of honest pleasure, now glisten in your eyes, my dear Charles! mine, nearly overflowed, while I listened to the animated praises of the country people.

“I seemed to see the handsome youth they described, leading two innocent babes in his hand under the lowly roof of the farm, and assuring the grateful couple, that in permitting him to restore them to their home, they had given him the sincerest delight he ever felt.

“On hearing your name, I became still more interested in you. Once in an attack of robbers among the Appenines, my life had been saved by your father.”

“ My father!” cried Leopolstat, and a strange pang of anguish and pleasure seized his heart.

“Yes, your father; he had some fine qualities: bravery was one. Till now, we were strangers, but after that, we became intimate: that, however, ended; no matter how he was fond of gaiety, I of retirement: but to return to yourself.

“ From the day I spoke of, I hankered after you: my whimsical old brain was often thinking how it could serve or please you. At last upon hearing about your gallant rescue of General — I projected my romantic plan.

“ Such a plan, would never have entered any head, but that of an antiquated, romance-reader, like myself. For to show you what a fool of a father-in-law, you are about to have, I must own, that I am as greedy a devourer of novels and legends, as ever I was at fourteen. At first, I meant to go no further, than sending you a few presents and letters: then to discover myself, and take you under my wing for life.

“But when I reflected on the wholesome discipline which the world gives every young man without money or patrons; and how much, independence and

energy are nourished by a certainty of depending solely on one's own powers; when I scrutinised your conduct, and found it so nobly upright; I thought my happiness and my daughter's, would be secured, and yours not injured, if I could manage to make you my son."

"Dear, dear Sir!" exclaimed Charles, wringing his hand, with unutterable gratitude.

Returning the friendly pressure, Ingersdorf resumed. "Most ably, had I manœuvred, in my own opinion, by writing my letters, so equivocally, as to leave it dubious, whether the writer were a man or a woman: most confidently did I reckon upon this mystery occupying your heart so much, as to leave no room for another object.

"What a blow then, did I receive, when I heard of your engagements at Mantua! It was many days before I recovered myself sufficiently to address you again: but I could not hesitate about how that should be. You were still dear to me; and Adelaide, believing herself destined for Forsheim, had never heard me breathe your name."

Here, the Marshal hesitated; not knowing how to advert to the death of Signora Berghi ; he therefore left a chasm in his narrative, resuming it thus:

"It had been my intention to send Adelaide to her aunt's at Vienna, as soon as the Italian campaign should finish; and then to scheme again, that you might be introduced to my brother.

"I had no doubt of your falling in love with Adelaide, so charming as she is: and if she had been odious, my sanguine temper would have made the thing equally probable; I was therefore transported, when Providence brought you acquainted in so interesting away: when it insured to you, the regard of my brother, and gave you opportunity of mutually estimating the excellencies of each other.

"Knowing the state of your heart, and shrewdly guessing at what would soon be Adelaide's (for I had educated her to admire such a character as yours; and had forced her from any other attachment, by keeping her in a convent); I resolved to remain quiet, till her artless letters, and the more circumstantial ones of the Baron, should have convinced me that my scheme was ripe.

"Just as I was preparing to terminate your suspense, that cursed lawsuit commenced, and my hopes, seemed on the point of being hurled into the gulf of destruction.

"You know how long it has annoyed me; but it is now over : and I can give you my Adelaide, with the fortune I first intended."

Every person that either is in love, or has been in love, will imagine the disinterested expressions of Charles: they were as sincere as they were ardent; and made the father's eyes, sparkle with joy.

“ Ah! You may well thank your old, silly incognito:” cried he, “you know not what trouble he has had, to bring this hopeful vessel into a safe harbour. Forsheim, was at first, the most obliging, tractable creature under the sun: he admitted the obligation I was under, thus to recompense the son of a man to whom I owed my life; he saw the harmonious justice of giving a gallant, poor fellow, a rich wife, that knew how to value him: and he was so ready to be my Aide-de-camp, in the affair! — so obedient to orders! — but, lackaday, my young gentleman chose to fall in love, with an Italian rustic; and then came entreaties, and expostulations, and threats of marrying, before I could turn myself round: then my hero, grew eloquent for your sake; then he professed to know by sad experience, the misery of protracted hopes, conjuring me to end your sorrows immediately.

“I was thunderstruck. For in the haste with which I pursued my favourite object, I never took into the account, these annoying stumbling blocks. However, Forsheim got me to promise, that if my lawsuit were still pending, when the army went into winter quarters, I would give him leave to reveal Adelaide's freedom, by marrying his pretty Lorenza.”

“Amiable Forsheim!” cried Charles, “how much do I owe him !”

“But you don't know yet, half the amusing incidents for which you are indebted to me;” said the Marshal, “do you remember the Signora Albertini?”

A stronger tide of blood, rushed to the face of Leopoldstat, at this unexpected question.

“Egregious puppy! You have no reason to blush:” resumed his friend — “no, you have a right to triumph. Few young men can resist like you, the siren charms of beauty, accomplishment, and well-acted tenderness. Yet, I dare say it was not merely acted, after she saw you.”

“ Had she never seen me before!” exclaimed the astonished Charles.

“No, on my honour! — I projected the whole affair. I knew her for the most avaricious wretch alive, and I bribed her into this trial of your principles. Do you blame me, for thus proving in every way, the man in whose care I sought to repose the treasure of my heart?”

“So far from it;” cried Leopoldstat, “that a whole life spent in striving to grow worthy of such a trust, will never be enough to show my gratitude.”

After this complete explanation, the conversation flowed over the past and the future: each had minute descriptions to give of their mutual feelings upon particular events; and each loved to dwell upon the graces of Adelaide.

As she was to be at the chateau the next morning, Charles before he departed, obtained permission to visit there at an early hour.

Scarcely had Mam'selle de Ingersdorf alighted from the carriage which conveyed her to the chateau Balzac, ere the Marshal informed her, that she would see an old friend very soon.

The blood brightly painted her cheeks, when he mentioned their visitor's name.

Adelaide was ignorant of the real motive for a journey, which she had undertaken solely to oblige her father, and now, was far from conjecturing its probable termination: yet she trembled with undefinable joy; eagerly anticipating the moment in which her eyes would again behold their best, and dearest object.

Marshal Ingersdorf had never once hinted, the peculiar interest he took in Charles, nor the views he entertained for him: but willing to give his daughter's attachment a little hope to feed on, he assured her (on her removal from Vienna) that she should never be the wife of Count Forsheim, unless she preferred him to the whole world: that if she would wait the conclusion of the eventful lawsuit and the campaign, she should then have an opportunity of studying her destined husband's character, and be left at liberty to accept or to reject him.

So indulgent an assurance, would have led Adelaide immediately to confess the state of her heart, had not delicacy shrunk from the pain of avowing even to a parent, the excess of an affection that had never been claimed by its object. Relying on the goodness of Providence, on the apparent preference of Charles, and the prospect of renewing their former intimacy, after her engagement with Forsheim should be avowedly dissolved, she cheerfully acquiesced in her father's wishes; and found uncertainty, a mental Paradise, when contrasted with her late despair.

In what rapid tides, did the blood now flow through her veins! Her ardent complexion became enriched with a still warmer crimson; and her dazzling eyes (whose colour and lucidity, united the two extremes of light and darkness) were more than effulgent. They were brightly flashing over her companions at the breakfast table, when a servant announced Count Leopoldstat.

At the sound of a name, which was never pronounced without bringing before her, the loveliest countenance that ever proclaimed a lovely soul, she almost closed these brilliant eyes; as if seeing, and hearing Charles, at the same moment, would be bliss too much. He saw nothing but her: and he saw in her trembling agitation, all that his fond heart desired.

The Marshal, who had settled the plan of operations, with his future son-in-law, soon contrived to break up the breakfast party: he pronounced the day delightful, and the prospect from a window into the garden, so alluring, that he

begged permission to breathe the air there, with his friend. Adelaide of course was included in this association; which was not likely to be enlarged, as Monsieur Balzac had the gout, and his sister never disturbed digestion after a meal.

The considerate Marshal was so anxious to dissipate his daughter's confusion, by drawing her into lively conversation, that he walked twice round the great garden, before he observed that Charles was heartily wishing him at the Antipodes. — He then abruptly stopped at the door of a pavillion, where he bid his daughter rest herself under the protection of Count Leopoldstat, while he took a brisker circuit through the walks.

Adelaide had not leisure to wonder at this strange conduct: for her attention was instantly absorbed by the ardent impatience of Charles, who soon won from her, a declaration of mutual preference.

Sweet to him, was the bashful apprehensiveness, with which she gradually discovered the whole other past feelings. — The fearful, trembling Adelaide, blushing at her own confessions, averting her glowing eyes from his, and shrinking from the involuntary transport with which he now pressed her in his arms, was to him an object at once of the tenderest love, and the profoundest respect. Seeing in her, the chosen companion of his future days, the beloved sharer of eternity, his heart throbbed with a sacred joy, which beaming from his countenance, spoke peace to the timid delicacy of Adelaide.

It was now, that each felt the reward of their past sufferings: — it was now that, looking back with exultation upon their sincere endeavours to follow the path marked out by duty, they indulged in present happiness, without apprehension or regret.

What Adelaide owed to the eccentric goodness of her father, gave a new charm to the ties of parent and child: and at this moment she acquired fresh delight, by gaining additional motives for loving two persons, already dearer to her than life.

The Marshal met his young companions at the entrance of the house: Adelaide fervently returned the kiss he pressed on her burning cheek, and whispered out a blessing for his kindness. She then broke away, to thank a Mightier Parent, whose smallest mercies, were never suffered by her, to pass unacknowledged.

It may be conjectured, that Leopoldstat did not leave Balzac, until he had obtained the Marshal's promise of remaining under its hospitable roof, during the suspension of hostilities: nay, he ventured to glance at the hope of being confirmed in his happiness, by the gift of Adelaide's hand, long before military duty should again call him into actual service.

The veteran did not blame this natural impatience: confessing, that since he had served nearly half the time for his daughter, which Jacob did for Laban's,

he might very fairly urge this, otherwise, unreasonable request. Promising to plead his cause himself, he then dismissed the young Count, who returned to headquarters, with an overflowing heart.

So many delightful recollections and anticipations crowded through the mind of Charles, that it was long ere he could compose himself sufficiently to dictate a letter of gratitude to Forsheim, and one of a tenderer character to Demetrius.

Thought of the latter was so associated with all his cares or pleasures, that till joy was communicated to him, it was but an imperfect joy for Charles.

Believing his brother nearly cured of his fatal attachment to Madame de Fontainville, and reposing securely on the soothing friendship of the Duchess di Felieri, he now wrote him an animated account of his present good fortune : adding to it, a proposal, that during the winter recess, they should endeavour to be once more established in the same regiment.

Demetrius had often expressed such a wish, in which Charles earnestly participated: and now that he was become certain of his illustrious Commander's favour, he resolved to use that favour in obtaining so desirable an object.

Scarcely had our hero finished this letter, ere he received that one from Demetrius in which the events of his far different fate, were detailed.

With grief, surprise, pity, and apprehension, did Charles peruse it! Though he had himself uniformly avoided what are falsely termed affairs of honour, he knew not how to blame his brother for meeting the Prince of Nuremberg. It would have been better, indeed, had he refused to sanction such an odious practice as duelling, in any way; but how was it to be expected from a youth of nineteen, thus to stifle honest indignation at tyrannical arrogance, merely by reflecting on the force of example ?

The new attachment of Demetrius, afflicted without displeasing his brother. The progress of it, described simply, yet powerfully, had been so gradual, and so evidently encouraged by the Duchess, that even a cynic would have found it difficult to have condemned Demetrius.

The character of this attachment was so amiable; its ground so laudable; the happiness it seemed fraught with (if not cruelly thwarted) so perfect and so pure: The prospect it opened, so brilliant (Charles had the weakness of humanity and was ambitious for this beloved brother); that at the destruction of all its views, his own happiness vanished from his eyes.

Such heavy sighs, as he had lately hoped never to draw again, now came from his oppressed heart: he reperused the letter; remembered Madame de Fontainville, and was wretched.

The correspondence of the Marquis de Liancour, had uniformly lamented the rooted passion of his daughter, whose constancy had withstood all the attacks of time, absence, and reflection. She still persisted in believing her heart incurable; rather deepening the wound, by giving herself up to solitude, than striving to heal it, in rational society.

That Demetrius had wilfully created this infatuated sentiment, and had therefore, been guilty of poisoning the existence of Zaire and her father, nay of seducing her soul from virtue, was but too certain: for so great an injury, a compensation was due; and that compensation must be the sacrifice of all Demetrius's present wishes.

Charles, saw no other path for his brother: covered as it was, with thorns, he yet pronounced it inevitable. For, to the upright conscience of Charles, the voice of Integrity, was ever the voice of Fate.

A sentence of banishment from Princess Constantia, was unwillingly given in his answer to Demetrius. He then destroyed his former letter; fearing to mingle with so painful a subject, that communication which at another period would have been warmly welcomed.

After this, Leopoldstat sought consolation from Adelaide: — He hastened to Balzac, and fortunately found her alone.

How watchful is love! — How easily does its slightest glance perceive an alteration in the object beloved! The mere sound of his voice as he spoke to a servant without, convinced Adelaide that her Charles was afflicted.

Her raised eyes, full of tender anxiety, momentarily charmed away his care: but it returned again, with unabated pain, till he had imparted it to her. Then was he indeed consoled! — consoled by the sight of new beauties in her equally fond and generous heart.

Adelaide pitied Madame de Fontainville; but she could not conceive how the destiny of that unfortunate woman, was to be ameliorated by the empty possession of a name, without the reality. Nay, to judge her feelings by her own, she believed that to know herself the sole obstacle between happiness and the man she loved, would be the severest misery she could endure.

Adelaide did not wantonly betray her friend's confidence; but Charles found that whenever she spoke of Princess Constantia, her emotion visibly increased.

Sadly sighing, the Count held her soft hand to his lips, and then said, "All our wishes, I see tend the same way; and all our notions of right, oppose them. The lovely suggestions of delicacy, cannot prevent you from acknowledging the rule that ought to guide Demetrius: he must act in conformity with principle; Madame de Fontainville may follow your guide.

“Yet how delightful are such just sentiments, to the man whom my Adelaide honours with her preference! How does he glory in the possession of a heart so governed!”

Charles was then proceeding to repeat (what seems no repetition to a lover) expressions of admiration, gratitude, and rapture, when the Baron and the Canon abruptly entered.

Mr. Balzac was an agreeable old gentleman that never asked impertinent questions, or looked impertinent remarks; he therefore, appeared to see nothing particular, in the visible assiduity of the young Count, but considerately engaged the lively Marshal, in a hot dispute.

Charles dined at Balzac, where some Englishmen met also: in compliment to whom, the Canon followed their country’s fashion, of sitting long after dinner. This circumstance afforded Charles an opportunity of making a masterly retreat from the dining room to the saloon; where he found the somniferous Madame Balzac taking her customary nap.

She slept as if she were in a trance ; so that he had ample power to urge the suit he had before preferred through the Marshal.

How could Adelaide deny any thing to so dear a petitioner? She tried to chide and refuse him, but the chilling words thawed on her lips; and her blushing eyes beamed with a yielding, which animated his importunity. She consented at last, because she wished to consent: promising to give him her hand, immediately after he should have terminated one of his anxieties, by procuring the exchange of his brother, into the regiment he commanded.

Leopolstat did not overrate his influence with the Archduke. That amiable Prince being well acquainted with the Count’s character, judged him to have private motives, equally pressing and praiseworthy, for the removal of his brother. An appointment about his own person, which he gave unasked, and a letter which he addressed himself, to the General of Cavalry, in Italy, decided the business.

Eager to press this suffering brother, to his, almost, paternal bosom, Charles no sooner received a gracious message from his royal commander, purporting the desired success; than he hastened to Balzac, and with persuasive earnestness, sought and obtained from Adelaide a ratification of her promise to become his wife directly after the arrival of Demetrius. He then wrote to the latter, urging him to expedite a journey upon which depended the completion of his happiness.

Charles knew Demetrius too well, to dread any thing from writing thus. He was aware that his own fraternal affection had been too long tried, to require now, the delay of his dearest wish: and that Demetrius being convinced of his tender commiseration, would see without envy, nay with consolatory pleasure, the felicitous end of his brother’s distress.

This letter, reached the Val di Taro, some days after the departure of Demetrius; from whence it followed him to Treviso. How much had happened to him in that short period!

END OF VOLUME II