

DEVEREUX - BOOK V.

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BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

A PORTRAIT.

MYSTERIOUS impulse at the heart, which never suffers us to be at rest, which urges us onward as by an unseen yet irresistible law—human planets in a petty orbit, hurried forever and forever, till our course is run and our light is quenched—through the circle of a dark and impenetrable destiny! art thou not some faint forecast and type of our wanderings hereafter; of the unslumbering nature of the soul; of the everlasting progress which we are predoomed to make through the countless steps and realms and harmonies in the infinite creation? Oh, often in my roving have I dared to dream so,—often have I soared on the wild wings of thought above the "smoke and stir" of this dim earth, and wrought, from the restless visions of my mind, a chart of the glories and the wonders which the released spirit may hereafter visit and behold!

What a glad awakening from self,—what a sparkling and fresh draught from a new source of being,—what a wheel within wheel, animating, impelling, arousing all the rest of this animal machine, is the first excitement of Travel! the first free escape from the bonds of the linked and tame life of cities and social vices,—the jaded pleasure and the hollow love, the monotonous round of sordid objects and dull desires,—the eternal chain that binds us to things and beings, mockeries of ourselves,—alike, but oh, how different! the shock that brings us nearer to men only to make us strive against them, and learn, from the harsh contest of veiled deceit and open force, that the more we share the aims of others, the more deeply and basely rooted we grow to the littleness of self!

I passed more lingeringly through France than I did through the other portions of my route. I had dwelt long enough in the capital to be anxious to survey the country. It was then that the last scale which

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the magic of Louis Quatorze and the memory of his gorgeous court had left upon the mortal eye fell off, and I saw the real essence of that monarch's greatness and the true relics of his reign. I saw the poor, and the degraded, and the racked, and the priest-ridden, tillers and peoplers of the soil, which made the substance beneath the glittering and false surface,—the body of that vast empire, of which I had hitherto beheld only the face, and THAT darkly, and for the most part covered by a mask!

No man can look upon France, beautiful France,—her rich soil, her temperate yet maturing clime, the gallant and bold spirits which she produces, her boundaries so indicated and protected by Nature itself, her advantages of ocean and land, of commerce and agriculture,—and not wonder that her prosperity should be so bloated, and her real state so wretched and diseased.

Let England draw the moral, and beware not only of wars which exhaust, but of governments which impoverish. A waste of the public wealth is the most lasting of public afflictions; and "the treasury which is drained by extravagance must be refilled by crime."

Tacitus.

I remember one beautiful evening an accident to my carriage occasioned my sojourn for a whole afternoon in a small village. The Cure honoured me with a visit; and we strolled, after a slight repast, into the hamlet. The priest was complaisant, quiet in manner, and not ill informed for his obscure station and scanty opportunities of knowledge; he did not seem, however, to possess the vivacity of his countrymen, but was rather melancholy and pensive, not only in his expression of countenance, but his cast of thought.

"You have a charming scene here: I almost feel as if it were a sin to leave it so soon."

We were, indeed, in a pleasant and alluring spot at the time I addressed this observation to the good Cure. A little rivulet emerged from the copse to the left, and ran sparkling and dimpling beneath our feet, to deck with a more living verdure the village green, which it intersected with a winding nor unmelodious stream. We had paused, and I was leaning against an old and solitary chestnut-tree, which commanded the whole scene. The village was a little in the rear, and the smoke from its few chimneys rose slowly to the silent and deep skies, not wholly unlike the human wishes, which, though they spring from the grossness and the fumes of earth, purify themselves as they ascend to heaven. And from the village (when other sounds, which I shall note presently, were for an instant still) came the whoop of children, mellowed by distance into a confused yet thrilling sound, which fell upon the heart like the voice of our gone childhood itself. Before, in the far expanse, stretched a chain of hills on which the autumn sun sank slowly, pouring its yellow

beams over groups of peasantry, which, on the opposite side of the rivulet and at some interval from us, were scattered, partly over the green, and partly gathered beneath the shade of a little grove. The former were of the young, and those to whom youth's sports are dear, and were dancing to the merry music, which (ever and anon blended with the laugh and the tone of a louder jest) floated joyously on our ears. The fathers and matrons of the hamlet were inhaling a more quiet joy beneath the trees, and I involuntarily gave a tenderer interest to their converse by supposing them to sanction to each other the rustic loves which they might survey among their children.

"Will not Monsieur draw nearer to the dancers?" said the Cure; "there is a plank thrown over the rivulet a little lower down."

"No!" said I, "perhaps they are seen to better advantage where we are: what mirth will bear too close an inspection?"

True, Sir," remarked the priest, and he sighed.

"Yet," I resumed musingly, and I spoke rather to myself than to my companion, "yet, how happy do they seem! what a revival of our Arcadian dreams are the flute and the dance, the glossy trees all glowing in the autumn sunset, the green sod, and the murmuring rill, and the buoyant laugh, startling the satyr in his leafy haunts; and the rural loves which will grow sweeter still when the sun has set, and the twilight has made the sigh more tender and the blush of a mellower hue! Ah, why is it only the revival of a dream? why must it be only an interval of labour and woe, the brief saturnalia of slaves, the green resting-spot in a dreary and long road of travail and toil?"

"You are the first stranger I have met," said the Cure, "who seems to pierce beneath the thin veil of our Gallic gayety; the first to whom the scene we now survey is fraught with other feelings than a belief in the happiness of our peasantry, and an envy at its imagined exuberance. But as it is not the happiest individuals, so I fear it is not the happiest nations, that are the gayest."

I looked at the Cure with some surprise. "Your remark is deeper than the ordinary wisdom of your tribe, my Father," said I.

"I have travelled over three parts of the globe," answered the Cure: "I was not always intended for what I am;" and the priest's mild eyes flashed with a sudden light that as suddenly died away. "Yes, I have travelled over the greater part of the known world," he repeated, in a more quiet tone; "and I have noted that where a man has many comforts to guard, and many rights to defend, he necessarily shares the thought and the seriousness of those who feel the value of a treasure which they possess, and whose most earnest meditations are intent upon providing against its loss. I have noted, too, that the joy produced by a momentary suspense of labour is naturally great in proportion to the

toil; hence it is that no European mirth is so wild as that of the Indian slave, when a brief holiday releases him from his task. Alas! that very mirth is the strongest evidence of the weight of the previous chains; even as, in ourselves, we find the happiest moment we enjoy is that immediately succeeding the cessation of deep sorrow to the mind or violent torture to the body."

This reflection, if true, may console us for the loss of those village dances and pleasant holidays for which "merry England" was once celebrated. The loss of them has been ascribed to the gloomy influence of the Puritans; but it has never occurred to the good poets, who have so mourned over that loss, that it is also to be ascribed to the /liberty/ which those Puritans /generalized/, if they did not introduce.—ED.

I was struck by this observation of the priest.

"I see now," said I, "that as an Englishman I have no reason to repine at the proverbial gravity of my countrymen, or to envy the lighter spirit of the sons of Italy and France."

"No," said the Cure; "the happiest nations are those in whose people you witness the least sensible reverses from gayety to dejection; and that /thought/, which is the noblest characteristic of the isolated man, is also that of a people. Freemen are serious; they have objects at their heart worthy to engross attention. It is reserved for slaves to indulge in groans at one moment and laughter at another."

"At that rate," said I, "the best sign for France will be when the gayety of her sons is no longer a just proverb, and the laughing lip is succeeded by the thoughtful brow."

We remained silent for several minutes; our conversation had shed a gloom over the light scene before us, and the voice of the flute no longer sounded musically on my ear. I proposed to the Cure to return to my inn. As we walked slowly in that direction, I surveyed my companion more attentively than I had hitherto done. He was a model of masculine vigour and grace of form; and, had I not looked earnestly upon his cheek, I should have thought him likely to outlive the very oaks around the hamlet church where he presided. But the cheek was worn and hectic, and seemed to indicate that the keen fire which burns at the deep heart, unseen, but unslaking, would consume the mortal fuel, long before Time should even have commenced his gradual decay.

"You have travelled, then, much, Sir?" said I, and the tone of my voice was that of curiosity.

The good Cure penetrated into my desire to hear something of his adventures; and few are the recluses who are not gratified by the interest of others, or who are unwilling to reward it by recalling those

portions of life most cherished by themselves. Before we parted that night, he told me his little history. He had been educated for the army; before he entered the profession he had seen the daughter of a neighbour, loved her, and the old story,—she loved him again, and died before the love passed the ordeal of marriage. He had no longer a desire for glory, but he had for excitement. He sold his little property and travelled, as he had said, for nearly fourteen years, equally over the polished lands of Europe and the far climates where Truth seems fable and Fiction finds her own legends realized or excelled.

He returned home poor in pocket and wearied in spirit. He became what I beheld him. "My lot is fixed now," said he, in conclusion; "but I find there is all the difference between quiet and content: my heart eats itself away here; it is the moth fretting the garment laid by, more than the storm or the fray would have worn it."

I said something, commonplace enough, about solitude, and the blessings of competence, and the country. The Cure shook his head gently, but made no answer; perhaps he did wisely in thinking the feelings are ever beyond the reach of a stranger's reasoning. We parted more affectionately than acquaintances of so short a date usually do; and when I returned from Russia, I stopped at the village on purpose to inquire after him. A few months had done the work: the moth had already fretted away the human garment; and I walked to his lowly and nameless grave, and felt that it contained the only quiet in which monotony is not blended with regret!

CHAPTER II.

THE ENTRANCE INTO PETERSBURG.—A RENCONTRE WITH AN IN- QUISITIVE AND MYSTERIOUS STRANGER.—NOTHING LIKE TRAVEL.

IT was certainly like entering a new world when I had the frigid felicity of entering Russia. I expected to have found Petersburg a wonderful city, and I was disappointed; it was a wonderful beginning of a city, and that was all I ought to have expected. But never, I believe, was there a place which there was so much difficulty in arriving at: such winds, such climate, such police arrangements,—arranged, too, by such fellows! six feet high, with nothing human about them but their uncleanness and ferocity! Such vexatious delays, difficulties, ordeals, through which it was necessary to pass, and to pass, too, with an air of the most perfect satisfaction and content. By the Lord! one would have imagined, at all events, it must be an earthly paradise, to be so arduous of access, instead of a

Dutch-looking town, with comfortless canals, and the most terrible climate in which a civilized creature was ever frozen to death. "It is just the city a nation of bears would build, if bears ever became architects," said I to myself, as I entered the northern capital, with my teeth chattering and my limbs in a state of perfect insensibility.

My vehicle stopped, at last, at an hotel to which I had been directed. It was a circumstance, I believe, peculiar to Petersburg, that, at the time I speak of, none of its streets had a name; and if one wanted to find out a house, one was forced to do so by oral description. A pleasant thing it was, too, to stop in the middle of a street, to listen to such description at full length, and find one's self rapidly becoming ice as the detail progressed. After I was lodged, thawed, and fed, I fell fast asleep, and slept for eighteen hours, without waking once; to my mind, it was a miracle that I ever woke again.

I then dressed myself, and taking my interpreter,—who was a Livonian, a great rascal, but clever, who washed twice a week, and did not wear a beard above eight inches long,—I put myself into my carriage, and went to deliver my letters of introduction. I had one in particular to the Admiral Apraxin; and it was with him that I was directed to confer, previous to seeking an interview with the Emperor. Accordingly I repaired to his hotel, which was situated on a sort of quay, and was really, for Petersburg, very magnificent. In this quarter, then or a little later, lived about thirty other officers of the court, General Jagoyinsky, General Cyernichoff, etc.; and, appropriately enough, the most remarkable public building in the vicinity is the great slaughter-house,—a fine specimen that of practical satire!

On endeavouring to pass through the Admiral's hall I had the mortification of finding myself rejected by his domestics. As two men in military attire were instantly admitted, I thought this a little hard upon a man who had travelled so far to see his admiralship, and, accordingly, hinted my indignation to Mr. Muscotofsky, my interpreter.

"You are not so richly dressed as those gentlemen," said he.

"That is the reason, is it?"

"If it so please Saint Nicholas, it is; and, besides, those gentlemen have two men running before them to cry, 'Clear the way!'"

"I had better, then, dress myself better, and take two /avant couriers/."

"If it so please Saint Nicholas." Upon this I returned, robed myself in scarlet and gold, took a couple of lacqueys, returned to Admiral Apraxin's, and was admitted in an instant. Who would have thought these savages so like us? Appearances, you see, produce realities all over the world!

The Admiral, who was a very great man at court—though he narrowly escaped Siberia, or the knout, some time after—was civil enough to me: but I soon saw that, favourite as he was with the Czar, that great man left but petty moves in the grand chessboard of politics to be played by any but himself; and my proper plan in this court appeared evidently to be unlike that pursued in most others, where it is better to win the favourite than the prince. Accordingly, I lost no time in seeking an interview with the Czar himself, and readily obtained an appointment to that effect.

On the day before the interview took place, I amused myself with walking over the city, gazing upon its growing grandeur, and casting, in especial, a wistful eye upon the fortress or citadel, which is situated in an island, surrounded by the city, and upon the building of which more than one hundred thousand men are supposed to have perished. So great a sacrifice does it require to conquer Nature!

While I was thus amusing myself, I observed a man in a small chaise with one horse pass me twice, and look at me very earnestly. Like most of my countrymen, I do not love to be stared at; however, I thought it better in that unknown country to change my intended frown for a good-natured expression of countenance, and turned away. A singular sight now struck my attention: a couple of men with beards that would have hidden a cassowary, were walking slowly along in their curious long garments, and certainly (I say it reverently) disgracing the semblance of humanity, when, just as they came by a gate, two other men of astonishing height started forth, each armed with a pair of shears. Before a second was over, off went the beards of the first two passengers; and before another second expired, off went the skirts of their garments too: I never saw excrescences so expeditiously lopped. The two operators, who preserved a profound silence during this brief affair, then retired a little, and the mutilated wanderers pursued their way with an air of extreme discomfiture.

”Nothing like travel, certainly!” said I, unconsciously aloud.

”True!” said a voice in English behind me. I turned, and saw the man who had noticed me so earnestly in the one horse chaise. He was a tall, robust man, dressed very plainly, and even shabbily, in a green uniform, with a narrow tarnished gold lace; and I judged him to be a foreigner, like myself, though his accent and pronunciation evidently showed that he was not a native of the country in the language of which he accosted me.

”It is very true,” said he again; ”there is nothing like travel!”

”And travel,” I rejoined courteously, ”in those places where travel seldom extends. I have only been six days at Petersburg, and till I came hither, I knew nothing of the variety of human nature or the power

of human genius. But will you allow me to ask the meaning of the very singular occurrence we have just witnessed?"

"Oh, nothing," rejoined the man, with a broad strong smile, "nothing but an attempt to make men out of brutes. This custom of shaving is not, thank Heaven, much wanted now: some years ago it was requisite to have several stations for barbers and tailors to perform their duties in. Now this is very seldom necessary; those gentlemen were especially marked out for the operation. By ——" (and here the man swore a hearty English and somewhat seafaring oath, which a little astonished me in the streets of Petersburg), "I wish it were as easy to lop off all old customs! that it were as easy to clip the /beard of the mind/, Sir! Ha! ha!"

"But the Czar must have found a little difficulty in effecting even this outward amendment; and to say truth, I see so many beards about still that I think the reform has been more partial than universal."

"Ah, those are the beards of the common people: the Czar leaves those for the present. Have you seen the docks yet?"

"No, I am not sufficiently a sailor to take much interest in them."

"Humph! humph! you are a soldier, perhaps?"

"I hope to be so one day or other: I am not yet!"

"Not yet! humph! there are opportunities in plenty for those who wish it; what is your profession, then, and what do you know best?"

I was certainly not charmed with the honest inquisitiveness of the stranger. "Sir," said I, "Sir, my profession is to answer no questions; and what I know best is—to hold my tongue!"

The stranger laughed out. "Well, well, that is what all Englishmen know best!" said he; "but don't be offended: if you will come home with me I will give you a glass of brandy!"

"I am very much obliged for the offer, but business obliges me to decline it; good morning, Sir."

"Good morning!" answered the man, slightly moving his hat, in answer to my salutation.

We separated, as I thought; but I was mistaken. As ill-luck would have it, I lost my way in endeavouring to return home. While I was interrogating a French artisan, who seemed in a prodigious hurry, up comes my inquisitive friend in green again. "Ha! you have lost your way: I can put you into it better than any man in Petersburg!"

I thought it right to accept the offer; and we moved on side by side. I now looked pretty attentively at my gentleman. I have said that he was tall and stout; he was also remarkably well-built, and had a kind of seaman's ease and freedom of gait and manner. His countenance was very peculiar; short, firm, and strongly marked; a small, but thick mustachio covered his upper lip; the rest of his face was shaved. His mouth was wide, but closed, when silent, with that expression of iron resolution which no feature /but/ the mouth can convey. His eyes were large, well-opened, and rather stern; and when, which was often in the course of conversation, he pushed back his hat from his forehead, the motion developed two strong deep wrinkles between the eyebrows, which might be indicative either of thought or of irascibility,—perhaps of both. He spoke quickly, and with a little occasional embarrassment of voice, which, however, never communicated itself to his manner. He seemed, indeed, to have a perfect acquaintance with the mazes of the growing city; and, every now and then, stopped to say when such a house was built, whither such a street was to lead, etc. As each of these details betrayed some great triumph over natural obstacles and sometimes over national prejudice, I could not help dropping a few enthusiastic expressions in praise of the genius of the Czar. The man's eyes sparkled as he heard them.

"It is easy to see," said I, "that you sympathize with me, and that the admiration of this great man is not confined to Englishmen. How little in comparison seem all other monarchs!—they ruin kingdoms; the Czar creates one. The whole history of the world does not afford an instance of triumphs so vast, so important, so glorious as his have been. How his subjects should adore him!"

"No," said the stranger, with an altered and thoughtful manner, "it is not his subjects, but /their posterity/, that will appreciate his motives, and forgive him for wishing Russia to be an empire of MEN. The present generation may sometimes be laughed, sometimes forced, out of their more barbarous habits and brute-like customs, but they cannot be reasoned out of them; and they don't love the man who attempts to do it. Why, Sir, I question whether Ivan IV., who used to butcher the dogs between prayers for an occupation, and between meals for an appetite, I question whether his memory is not to the full as much loved as the living Czar. I know, at least, that whenever the latter attempts a reform, the good Muscovites shrug up their shoulders, and mutter, 'We did not do these things in the good old days of Ivan IV.'"

"Ah! the people of all nations are wonderfully attached to their ancient customs; and it is not unfrequently that the most stubborn enemies to living men are their own ancestors."

"Ha! ha!—true—good!" cried the stranger; and then, after a short pause, he said in a tone of deep feeling which had not hitherto seemed at all a part of his character, "We should do that which is good to the human race, from some principle within, and should not therefore abate

our efforts for the opposition, the rancour, or the ingratitude that we experience without. It will be enough reward for Peter I., if hereafter, when (in that circulation of knowledge throughout the world which I can compare to nothing better than the circulation of the blood in the human body) the glory of Russia shall rest, not upon the extent of her dominions, but that of her civilization,—not upon the number of inhabitants, embruted and besotted, but the number of enlightened, prosperous, and free men; it will be enough for him, if he be considered to have laid the first stone of that great change,—if his labours be fairly weighed against the obstacles which opposed them,—if, for his honest and unceasing endeavour to improve millions, he be not too severely judged for offences in a more limited circle,—and if, in consideration of having fought the great battle against custom, circumstances, and opposing nature, he be sometimes forgiven for not having invariably conquered himself.”

As the stranger broke off abruptly, I could not but feel a little impressed by his words and the energy with which they were spoken. We were now in sight of my lodging. I asked my guide to enter it; but the change in our conversation seemed to have unfitted him a little for my companionship.

”No,” said he, ”I have business now; we shall meet again; what’s your name?”

”Certainly,” thought I, ”no man ever scrupled so little to ask plain questions:” however, I answered him truly and freely.

”Devereux!” said he, as if surprised. ”Ha!—well—we shall meet again. Good day.”

CHAPTER III.

THE CZAR.—THE CZARINA.—A FEAST AT A RUSSIAN NOBLEMAN’S.

THE next day I dressed myself in my richest attire; and, according to my appointment, went with as much state as I could command to the Czar’s palace (if an exceedingly humble abode can deserve so proud an appellation). Although my mission was private, I was a little surprised by the extreme simplicity and absence from pomp which the royal residence presented. I was ushered for a few moments into a paltry ante-chamber, in which were several models of ships, cannon, and houses; two or three indifferent portraits,—one of King William III., another of Lord Caermarthen. I was then at once admitted into the royal presence.

There were only two persons in the room,—one a female, the other a man; no officers, no courtiers, no attendants, none of the insignia nor the witnesses of majesty. The female was Catherine, the Czarina; the man was the stranger I had met the day before—and Peter the Great. I was a little startled at the identity of the Czar with my inquisitive acquaintance. However, I put on as assured a countenance as I could. Indeed, I had spoken sufficiently well of the royal person to feel very little apprehension at having unconsciously paid so slight a respect to the royal dignity.

”Ho! ho!” cried the Czar, as I reverently approached him; ”I told you we should meet soon!” and turning round, he presented me to her Majesty. That extraordinary woman received me very graciously: and, though I had been a spectator of the most artificial and magnificent court in Europe, I must confess that I could detect nothing in the Czarina’s air calculated to betray her having been the servant of a Lutheran minister and the wife of a Swedish dragoon; whether it was that greatness was natural to her, or whether (which was more probable) she was an instance of the truth of Suckling’s hackneyed thought, in ”Brennoralt,”—”Success is a rare paint,—hides all the ugliness.”

While I was making my salutations, the Czarina rose very quietly, and presently, to my no small astonishment, brought me with her own hand a tolerably large glass of raw brandy. There is nothing in the world I hate so much as brandy; however, I swallowed the potation as if it had been nectar, and made some fine speech about it, which the good Czarina did not seem perfectly to understand. I then, after a few preliminary observations, entered upon my main business with the Czar. Her Majesty sat at a little distance, but evidently listened very attentively to the conversation. I could not but be struck with the singularly bold and strong sense of my royal host. There was no hope of deluding or misleading him by diplomatic subterfuge. The only way by which that wonderful man was ever misled was through his passions. His reason conquered all errors but those of temperament. I turned the conversation as artfully as I could upon Sweden and Charles XII. ”Hatred to one power,” thought I, ”may produce love to another; and if it does, the child will spring from a very vigorous parent.” While I was on this subject, I observed a most fearful convulsion come over the face of the Czar,—one so fearful that I involuntarily looked away. Fortunate was it that I did so. Nothing ever enraged him more than being observed in those constitutional contortions of countenance to which from his youth he had been subjected.

After I had conversed with the Czar as long as I thought decorum permitted, I rose to depart. He dismissed me very complaisantly. I re-entered my fine equipage, and took the best of my way home.

Two or three days afterwards, the Czar ordered me to be invited to a grand dinner at Apraxin’s. I went there, and so found myself in conversation with a droll little man, a Dutch Minister, and a great

favourite with the Czar. The Admiral and his wife, before we sat down to eat, handed round to each of their company a glass of brandy on a plate.

"What an odious custom!" whispered the little Dutch Minister, smacking his lips, however, with an air of tolerable content.

"Why," said I, prudently, "all countries have their customs. Some centuries ago, a French traveller thought it horrible in us Englishmen to eat raw oysters. But the English were in the right to eat oysters; and perhaps, by and by, so much does civilization increase, we shall think the Russians in the right to drink brandy. But really [we had now sat down to the entertainment], I am agreeably surprised here. All the guests are dressed like my own countrymen; a great decorum reigns around. If it were a little less cold, I might fancy myself in London or in Paris."

"Wait," quoth the little Dutchman, with his mouth full of jelly broth, "wait till you hear them talk. What think you, now, that lady next me is saying?"

"I cannot guess: but she has the prettiest smile in the world; and there is something at once so kind and so respectful in her manner that I should say she was either asking some great favour, or returning thanks for one."

"Right," cried the little Minister, "I will interpret for you. She is saying to that old gentleman, 'Sir, I am extremely grateful—and may Saint Nicholas bless you for it—for your very great kindness in having, the day before yesterday, at your sumptuous entertainment, made me so deliciously—drunk!'"

"You are witty, Monsieur," said I, smiling. "/Se non e vero e ben trovato/."

"By my soul, it is true," cried the Dutchman; "but, hush!—see, they are going to cut up that great pie."

I turned my eyes to the centre of the table, which was ornamented with a huge pasty. Presently it was cut open, and out—walked a hideous little dwarf.

"Are they going to eat him?" said I.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Dutchman. "No! this is a fashion of the Czar's, which the Admiral thinks it good policy to follow. See, it tickles the hebeté Russians. They are quite merry on it."

"To be sure," said I; "practical jokes are the only witticisms savages understand."

”Ay, and if it were not for such jokes now and then, the Czar would be odious beyond measure; but dwarf pies and mock processions make his subjects almost forgive him for having shortened their clothes and clipped their beards.”

”The Czar is very fond of those mock processions?”

”Fond!” and the little man sank his voice into a whisper; ”he is the sublimest buffoon that ever existed. I will tell you an instance—Do you like these Hungary wines, by the by?—On the 9th of last June, the Czar carried me, and half-a-dozen more of the foreign ministers, to his pleasure-house (Peterhoff). Dinner, as usual, all drunk with Tokay, and finished by a quart of brandy each, from her Majesty’s own hand. Carried off to sleep,—some in the garden, some in the wood. Woke at four, still in the clouds. Carried back to the pleasure-house, found the Czar there, made us a low bow, and gave us a hatchet apiece, with orders to follow him. Off we trudged, rolling about like ships in the Zuyder Zee, entered a wood, and were immediately set to work at cutting a road through it. Nice work for us of the /corps diplomatique/! And, by my soul, Sir, you see that I am by no means a thin man! We had three hours of it, were carried back, made drunk again, sent to bed, roused again in an hour, made drunk a third time; and, because we /could not/ be waked again, left in peace till eight the next morning. Invited to court to breakfast; such headaches we had; longed for coffee; found nothing but brandy; forced to drink; sick as dogs; sent to take an airing upon the most damnable little horses, not worth a guilder, no bridles nor saddles; bump—bump—bump we go, up and down before the Czar’s window,—he and the Czarina looking at us. I do assure you I lost two stone by that ride,—two stone, Sir!—taken to dinner; drunk again, by the Lord, all bundled on board a /torrenschute/; devil of a storm came on; Czar took the rudder; Czarina on high benches in the cabin, which was full of water; waves beating; winds blowing; certain of being drowned; charming prospect!—tossed about for seven hours; driven into the port of Cronsflot. Czar leaves us, saying, ’Too much of a jest, eh, gentlemen?’ All got ashore wet as dog-fishes, made a fire, stripped stark naked (a Dutch ambassador stark naked,—think of it, Sir!), crept into some covers of sledges, and rose next morning with the ague,—positive fact, Sir! Had the ague for two months. Saw the Czar in August; ’A charming excursion to my pleasure-house,’ said his Majesty; ’we must make another party there soon.’”

As the Dutchman delivered himself of the little history he was by no means forgetful of the Hungary wines; and as Bacchus and Venus have old affinity, he now began to grow eloquent on the women.

”What think you of them yourself?” said he; ”they have a rolling look, eh?”

”They have so,” I answered: ”but they all have black teeth; what’s the

reason?"

"They think it a beauty, and say white teeth are the sign of a blackamoor."

Here the Dutchman was accosted by some one else, and there was a pause. Dinner at last ceased; the guests did not sit long after dinner, and for a very good reason: the brandy bowl is a great enforcer of a prostrate position! I had the satisfaction of seeing the company safely under the table. The Dutchman went first, and, having dexterously manoeuvred an escape from utter oblivion for myself, I managed to find my way home, more edified than delighted by the character of a Russian entertainment.

CHAPTER IV.

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE CZAR.—IF CROMWELL WAS THE GREATEST MAN (CAESAR EXCEPTED) WHO EVER /ROSE/ TO THE SUPREME POWER, PETER WAS THE GREATEST MAN EVER /BORN/ TO IT.

IT was singular enough that my introduction to the notice of Peter the Great and Philip le Debonnaire should have taken place under circumstances so far similar that both those illustrious personages were playing the part rather of subjects than of princes. I cannot, however, conceive a greater mark of the contrast between their characters than the different motives and manners of the incognitos severally assumed.

Philip, in a scene of low riot and debauch, hiding the Jupiter under the Silenus,—wearing the mask only for the licentiousness it veiled, and foregoing the prerogative of power, solely for indulgence in the grossest immunities of vice.

Peter, on the contrary, parting with the selfishness of state in order to watch the more keenly over the interests of his people, only omitting to preside in order to examine, and affecting the subject only to learn the better the duties of the prince. Had I leisure, I might here pause to point out a notable contrast, not between the Czar and the Regent, but between Peter the Great and Louis le Grand: both creators of a new era,—both associated with a vast change in the condition of two mighty empires. There ceases the likeness and begins the contrast: the blunt simplicity of Peter, the gorgeous magnificence of Louis; the sternness of a legislator for barbarians, the clemency of an idol of courtiers. One the victorious defender of his country,—a victory solid, durable, and just; the other the conquering devastator of a neighbouring people,—a victory, glittering, evanescent, and dishonourable. The one,

in peace, rejecting parade, pomp, individual honours, and transforming a wilderness into an empire: the other involved in ceremony, and throned on pomp; and exhausting the produce of millions to pamper the bloated vanity of an individual. The one a fire that burns, without enlightening beyond a most narrow circle, and whose lustre is tracked by what it ruins, and fed by what it consumes; the other a luminary, whose light, not so dazzling in its rays, spreads over a world, and is noted, not for what it destroys, but for what it vivifies and creates.

I cannot say that it was much to my credit that, while I thought the Regent's condescension towards me natural enough, I was a little surprised by the favour shown me by the Czar. At Paris, I had /seemed/ to be the man of pleasure: that alone was enough to charm Philip of Orleans. But in Russia, what could I seem in any way calculated to charm the Czar? I could neither make ships nor could sail them when they were made; I neither knew, nor, what was worse, cared to know, the stern from the rudder. Mechanics were a mystery to me; road-making was an incomprehensible science. Brandy I could not endure; a blunt bearing and familiar manner I could not assume. What was it, then, that made the Czar call upon me, at least twice a week in private, shut himself up with me by the hour together, and endeavour to make me drunk with Tokay, in order (as he very incautiously let out one night), "to learn the secrets of my heart"? I thought, at first, that the nature of my mission was enough to solve the riddle: but we talked so little about it that, with all my diplomatic vanities fresh about me, I could not help feeling I owed the honour I received less to my qualities as a minister than to those as an individual.

At last, however, I found that the secret attraction was what the Czar termed the philosophical channel into which our conferences flowed. I never saw a man so partial to moral problems and metaphysical inquiries, especially to those connected with what ought to be the beginning or the end of all moral sciences,—politics. Sometimes we would wander out in disguise, and select some object from the customs or things around us, as the theme of reflection and discussion; nor in these moments would the Czar ever allow me to yield to his rank what I might not feel disposed to concede to his arguments. One day, I remember that he arrested me in the streets, and made me accompany him to look upon two men undergoing the fearful punishment of the battaog; one was a German, the other a Russian: the former shrieked violently, struggled in the hands of his punishers, and, with the utmost difficulty, was subjected to his penalty; the latter bore it patiently and in silence; he only spoke once, and it was to say, "God bless the Czar!"

A terrible kind of flogging, but less severe than the knout.

"Can your Majesty hear the man," said I, warmly, when the Czar interpreted these words to me, "and not pardon him?" Peter frowned, but I was not silenced. "You don't know the Russians!" said he, sharply, and turned aside. The punishment was now over. "Ask the German," said

the Czar to an officer, "what was his offence?" The German, who was writhing and howling horribly, uttered some violent words against the disgrace of the punishment, and the pettiness of his fault; what the fault was I forget.

"Now ask the Russian," said Peter. "My punishment was just!" said the Russian, coolly, putting on his clothes as if nothing had happened; "God and the Czar were angry with me!"

"Come away, Count," said the Czar; "and now solve me a problem. I know both those men, and the German, in a battle, would be the braver of the two. How comes it that he weeps and writhes like a girl, while the Russian bears the same pain without a murmur?"

"Will your Majesty forgive me," said I, "but I cannot help wishing that the Russian had complained more bitterly; insensibility to punishment is the sign of a brute, not a hero. Do you not see that the German felt the indignity, the Russian did not? and do you not see that that very pride which betrays agony under the disgrace of the battaog is exactly the very feeling that would have produced courage in the glory of the battle? A sense of honour makes better soldiers and better men than indifference to pain."

"But had I ordered the Russian to death, he would have gone with the same apathy and the same speech, 'It is just! I have offended God and the Czar!'"

"Dare I observe, Sire, that that fact would be a strong proof of the dangerous falsity of the old maxims which extol indifference to death as a virtue? In some individuals it may be a sign of virtue, I allow; but, as a /national trait/, it is the strongest sign of national misery. Look round the great globe. What countries are those where the inhabitants bear death with cheerfulness, or, at least, with apathy? Are they the most civilized, the most free, the most prosperous? Pardon me; no! They are the half-starved, half-clothed, half-human sons of the forest and the waste; or, when gathered in states, they are slaves without enjoyment or sense beyond the hour; and the reason that they do not recoil from the pangs of death is because they have never known the real pleasures or the true objects of life."

"Yet," said the Czar, musingly, "the contempt of death was the great characteristic of the Spartans."

"And, therefore," said I, "the great token that the Spartans were a miserable horde. Your Majesty admires England and the English; you have, beyond doubt, witnessed an execution in that country; you have noted, even where the criminal is consoled by religion, how he trembles, and shrinks,—how dejected, how prostrate of heart he is before the doom is completed. Take now the vilest slave, either of the Emperor of Morocco or the great Czar of Russia. He changes neither tint nor

muscle; he requires no consolation; he shrinks from no torture. What is the inference? /That slaves dread death less than the free/. And it should be so. The end of legislation is not to make /death/, but /life/, a blessing.”

”You have put the matter in a new light,” said the Czar; but you allow that, in individuals, contempt of death is sometimes a virtue.”

”Yes, when it springs from mental reasonings, not physical indifference. But your Majesty has already put in action one vast spring of a system which will ultimately open to your subjects so many paths of existence that they will preserve contempt for its proper objects, and not lavish it solely, as they do now, on the degradation which sullies life and the axe that ends it. You have already begun the conquest of another and a most vital error in the philosophy of the ancients,—that philosophy taught that man should have few wants, and made it a crime to increase and a virtue to reduce them. A legislator should teach, on the contrary, that man should have many wants: for wants are not only the sources of enjoyment,—they are the sources of improvement; and that nation will be the most enlightened among whose populace they are found the most numerous. You, Sire, by circulating the arts, the graces, create a vast herd of moral wants hitherto unknown, and in those wants will hereafter be found the prosperity of your people, the fountain of your resources, and the strength of your empire.”

In conversation on these topics we often passed hours together, and from such conferences the Czar passed only to those on other topics more immediately useful to him. No man, perhaps, had a larger share of the mere human frailties than Peter the Great; yet I do confess that when I saw the nobleness of mind with which he flung aside his rank as a robe, and repaired from man to man, the humblest or the highest, the artisan or the prince,—the prosperity of his subjects his only object, and the acquisition of knowledge his only means to obtain it,—I do confess that my mental sight refused even to perceive his frailties, and that I could almost have bent the knee in worship to a being whose benevolence was so pervading a spirit, and whose power was so glorious a minister to utility.

Towards the end of January, I completed my mission, and took my leave of the court of Russia.

”Tell the Regent,” said Peter, ”that I shall visit him in France soon, and shall expect to see his drawings if I show him my models.”

In effect, the next month (February 16), the Czar commenced his second course of travels. He was pleased to testify some regard for me on my departure. ”If ever you quit the service of the French court, and your own does not require you, I implore you to come to me; I will give you /carte blanche/ as to the nature and appointments of your office.”

I need not say that I expressed my gratitude for the royal condescension; nor that, in leaving Russia, I brought, from the example of its sovereign, a greater desire to be useful to mankind than I had known before. Pattern and Teacher of kings, if each country in each century had produced one such ruler as you, either all mankind would /now/ be contented with despotism or all mankind would be /free/! Oh! when kings have only to be good, to be kept forever in our hearts and souls as the gods and benefactors of the earth, by what monstrous fatality have they been so blind to their fame? When we remember the millions, the generations, they can degrade, destroy, elevate, or save, we might almost think (even if the other riddles of the present existence did not require a future existence to solve them), we might almost think a hereafter /necessary/, were it but for the sole purpose of requiting the virtues of princes,—or their SINS!

Upon his death-bed Peter is reported to have said, "God, I dare trust, will look mercifully upon my faults in consideration of the good I have done my country." These are worthy to be the last words of a king! Rarely has there been a monarch who more required the forgiveness of the Creator; yet seldom perhaps has there been a human being who more deserved it.—ED.

CHAPTER V.

RETURN TO PARIS.—INTERVIEW WITH BOLINGBROKE.—A GALLANT ADVENTURE.—AFFAIR WITH DUBOIS.—PUBLIC LIFE IS A DRAMA, IN WHICH PRIVATE VICES GENERALLY PLAY THE PART OF THE SCENE-SHIFTERS.

IT is a strange feeling we experience on entering a great city by night,—a strange mixture of social and solitary impressions. I say by night, because at that time we are most inclined to feel; and the mind, less distracted than in the day by external objects, dwells the more intensely upon its own hopes and thoughts, remembrances and associations, and sheds over them, from that one feeling which it cherishes the most, a blending and a mellowing hue.

It was at night that I re-entered Paris. I did not tarry long at my hotel, before (though it was near upon midnight) I conveyed myself to Lord Bolingbroke's lodgings. Knowing his engagements at St. Germain, where the Chevalier (who had but a very few weeks before returned to France, after the crude and unfortunate affair of 1715), chiefly resided, I was not very sanguine in my hopes of finding him at Paris. I was, however, agreeably surprised. His servant would have ushered me into his study, but I was willing to introduce myself. I withheld the servant, and entered the room alone. The door was ajar, and Bolingbroke

neither heard nor saw me. There was something in his attitude and aspect which made me pause to survey him, before I made myself known. He was sitting by a table covered with books. A large folio (it was the Casaubon edition of Polybius) was lying open before him. I recognized the work at once: it was a favourite book with Bolingbroke, and we had often discussed the merits of its author. I smiled as I saw that that book, which has to statesmen so peculiar an attraction, made still the study from which the busy, restless, ardent, and exalted spirit of the statesman before me drew its intellectual food. But at the moment in which I entered his eye was absent from the page, and turned abstractedly in an opposite though still downcast direction. His countenance was extremely pale, his lips were tightly compressed, and an air of deep thought, mingled as it seemed to me with sadness, made the ruling expression of his lordly and noble features. "It is the torpor of ambition after one of its storms," said I, inly; and I approached, and laid my hand on his shoulder.

After our mutual greetings, I said, "Have the dead so strong an attraction that at this hour they detain the courted and courtly Bolingbroke from the admiration and converse of the living?"

The statesman looked at me earnestly: "Have you heard the news of the day?" said he.

"How is it possible? I have but just arrived at Paris."

"You do not know, then, that I have resigned my office under the Chevalier!"

"Resigned your office!"

"Resigned is a wrong word: I received a dismissal. Immediately on his return the Chevalier sent for me, embraced me, desired me to prepare to follow him to Lorraine; and three days afterwards came the Duke of Ormond to me, to ask me to deliver up the seals and papers. I put the latter very carefully in a little letter-case, and behold an end to the administration of Lord Bolingbroke! The Jacobites abuse me terribly; their king accuses me of neglect, incapacity, and treachery; and Fortune pulls down the fabric she has built for me, in order to pelt me with the stones!"

Letter to Sir W. Windham.—ED.

"My dear, dear friend, I am indeed grieved for you; but I am more incensed at the infatuation of the Chevalier. Surely, surely he must already have seen his error, and solicited your return?"

"Return!" cried Bolingbroke, and his eyes flashed fire,—"return!—Hear what I said to the Queen-Mother who came to attempt a reconciliation: 'Madam,' said I, in a tone as calm as I could command, 'if ever this

hand draws the sword, or employs the pen, in behalf of that prince, may it rot!' Return! not if my head were the price of refusal! Yet, Devereux,"—and here Bolingbroke's voice and manner changed,—"yet it is not at these tricks of fate that a wise man will repine. We do right to cultivate honours; they are sources of gratification to ourselves: they are more; they are incentives to the conduct which works benefits to others; but we do wrong to afflict ourselves at their loss. 'Nec quaerere nec spernere honores oportet.' It is good to enjoy the blessings of fortune: it is better to submit without a pang to their loss. You remember, when you left me, I was preparing myself for this stroke: believe me, I am now prepared."

"It becomes us neither to court nor to despise honours."

And in truth Bolingbroke bore the ingratitude of the Chevalier well. Soon afterwards he carried his long cherished wishes for retirement into effect; and Fate, who delights in reversing her disk, leaving in darkness what she had just illumined, and illumining what she had hitherto left in obscurity and gloom, for a long interval separated us from each other, no less by his seclusion than by the publicity to which she condemned myself.

Lord Bolingbroke's dismissal was not the only event affecting me that had occurred during my absence from France. Among the most active partisans of the Chevalier, in the expedition of Lord Mar, had been Montreuil. So great, indeed, had been either his services or the idea entertained of their value, that a reward of extraordinary amount was offered for his head. Hitherto he had escaped, and was supposed to be still in Scotland.

But what affected me more nearly was the condition of Gerald's circumstances. On the breaking out of the rebellion he had been suddenly seized, and detained in prison; and it was only upon the escape of the Chevalier that he was released: apparently, however, nothing had been proved against him; and my absence from the head-quarters of intelligence left me in ignorance both of the grounds of his imprisonment and the circumstances of his release.

I heard, however, from Bolingbroke, who seemed to possess some of that information which the ecclesiastical intriguants of the day so curiously transmitted from court to court and corner to corner, that Gerald had retired to Devereux Court in great disgust at his confinement. However, when I considered his bold character, his close intimacy with Montreuil, and the genius for intrigue which that priest so eminently possessed, I was not much inclined to censure the government for unnecessary precaution in his imprisonment.

There was another circumstance connected with the rebellion which possessed for me an individual and deep interest. A man of the name of Barnard had been executed in England for seditious and treasonable

practices. I took especial pains to ascertain every particular respecting him. I learned that he was young, of inconsiderable note, but esteemed clever; and had, long previously to the death of the Queen, been secretly employed by the friends of the Chevalier. This circumstance occasioned me much internal emotion, though there could be no doubt that the Barnard whom I had such cause to execrate had only borrowed from this minion the disguise of his name.

The Regent received me with all the graciousness and complaisance for which he was so remarkable. To say the truth, my mission had been extremely fortunate in its results; the only cause in which the Regent was concerned the interests of which Peter the Great appeared to disregard was that of the Chevalier; but I had been fully instructed on that head anterior to my legation.

There appears very often to be a sort of moral fitness between the beginning and the end of certain alliances or acquaintances. This sentiment is not very clearly expressed. I am about to illustrate it by an important event in my political life. During my absence Dubois had made rapid steps towards being a great man. He was daily growing into power, and those courtiers who were neither too haughty nor too honest to bend the knee to so vicious yet able a minion had already singled him out as a fit person to flatter and to rise by. For me, I neither sought nor avoided him: but he was as civil towards me as his /brusque/ temper permitted him to be towards most persons; and as our careers were not likely to cross one another, I thought I might reckon on his neutrality, if not on his friendship. Chance turned the scale against me.

One day I received an anonymous letter, requesting me to be, at such an hour, at a certain house in the Rue ——. It occurred to me as no improbable supposition that the appointment might relate to my individual circumstances, whether domestic or political, and I certainly had not at the moment any ideas of gallantry in my brain. At the hour prescribed I appeared at the place of assignation. My mind misgave me when I saw a female conduct me into a little chamber hung with tapestry descriptive of the loves of Mars and Venus. After I had cooled my heels in this apartment about a quarter of an hour, in sailed a tall woman, of a complexion almost Moorish. I bowed; the lady sighed. An /eclaircissement/ ensued; and I found that I had the good fortune to be the object of a /caprice/ in the favourite mistress of the Abbe Dubois. Nothing was further from my wishes! What a pity it is that one cannot always tell a woman one's mind!

I attempted a flourish about friendship, honour, and the respect due to the /amante/ of the most intimate /ami/ I had in the world.

"Pooh!" said the tawny Calypso, a little pettishly, "pooh! one does not talk of those things here."

"Madame," said I, very energetically, "I implore you to refrain. Do not

excite too severe a contest between passion and duty! I feel that I must fly you: you are already too bewitching.”

Just as I rose to depart in rushes the /femme de chambre/, and announces, not Monsieur the Abbe, but Monseigneur the Regent. Of course (the old resort in such cases) I was thrust in a closet; in marches his Royal Highness, and is received very cavalierly. It is quite astonishing to me what airs those women give themselves when they have princes to manage! However, my confinement was not long: the closet had another door; the /femme de chambre/ slips round, opens it, and I congratulate myself on my escape.

When a Frenchwoman is piqued, she passes all understanding. The next day I am very quietly employed at breakfast, when my valet ushers in a masked personage, and behold my gentlewoman again! Human endurance will not go too far, and this was a case which required one to be in a passion one way or the other; so I feigned anger, and talked with exceeding dignity about the predicament I had been placed in the day before.

”Such must always be the case,” said I, ”when one is weak enough to form an attachment to a lady who encourages so many others!”

”For your sake,” said the tender dame, ”for your sake, then, I will discard them all!”

There was something grand in this. it might have elicited a few strokes of pathos, when—never was there anything so strangely provoking—the Abbe Dubois himself was heard in my anteroom. I thought this chance, but it was more; the good Abbe, I afterwards found, had traced cause for suspicion, and had come to pay me a visit of amatory police. I opened my dressing-room door, and thrust in the lady. ”There,” said I, ”are the back-stairs, and at the bottom of the back-stairs is a door.”

Would not any one have thought this hint enough? By no means; this very tall lady stooped to the littleness of listening, and, instead of departing, stationed herself by the keyhole.

I never exactly learned whether Dubois suspected the visit his mistress had paid me, or whether he merely surmised, from his spies or her escritoire, that she harboured an inclination towards me; in either case his policy was natural, and like himself. He sat himself down, talked of the Regent, of pleasure, of women, and, at last, of this very tall lady in question.

”/La pauvre diablesse/,” said he, contemptuously, ”I had once compassion on her; I have repented it ever since. You have no idea what a terrible creature she is; has such a wen in her neck, quite a /goitre/. /Mort diable/!” (and the Abbe spat in his handkerchief), ”I would sooner have a /liaison/ with the witch of Endor!”

Not content with this, he went on in his usual gross and displeasing manner to enumerate or to forge those various particulars of her personal charms which he thought most likely to steel me against her attractions. "Thank Heaven, at least," thought I, "that she has gone!"

Scarcely had this pious gratulation flowed from my heart, before the door was burst open, and, pale, trembling, eyes on fire, hands clenched, forth stalked the lady in question. A wonderful proof how much sooner a woman would lose her character than allow it to be called not worth the losing! She entered, and had all the furies of Hades lent her their tongues, she could not have been more eloquent. It would have been a very pleasant scene if one had not been a partner in it. The old Abbe, with his keen, astute marked face, struggling between surprise, fear, the sense of the ridiculous, and the certainty of losing his mistress; the lady, foaming at the mouth, and shaking her clenched hand most menacingly at her traducer; myself endeavouring to pacify, and acting, as one does at such moments, mechanically, though one flatters one's self afterwards that one acted solely from wisdom.

But the Abbe's mistress was by no means content with vindicating herself: she retaliated, and gave so minute a description of the Abbe's own qualities and graces, coupled with so any pleasing illustrations, that in a very little time his coolness forsook him, and he grew in as great a rage as herself. At last she flew out of the room. The Abbe, trembling with passion, shook me most cordially by the hand, grinned from ear to ear, said it was a capital joke, wished me good-by as if he loved me better than his eyes, and left the house my most irreconcilable and bitter foe!

How could it be otherwise? The rivalry the Abbe might have forgiven; such things happened every day to him: but the having been made so egregiously ridiculous the Abbe could not forgive; and the Abbe's was a critical age for jesting on these matters, sixty or so. And then such unpalatable sarcasms on his appearance! "'Tis all over in that quarter," said I to myself, "but we may find another," and I drove out that very day to pay my respects to the Regent.

What a pity it is that one's pride should so often be the bane of one's wisdom. Ah! that one could be as good a man of the world in practice as one is in theory! my master-stroke of policy at that moment would evidently have been this: I should have gone to the Regent and made out a story similar to the real one, but with this difference, all the ridicule of the situation should have fallen upon me, and the little Dubois should have been elevated on a pinnacle of respectable appearances! This, as the Regent told the Abbe everything, would have saved me. I saw the plan; but was too proud to adopt it; I followed another course in my game: I threw away the knave, and played with the king, /i.e./, with the Regent. After a little preliminary conversation, I turned the conversation on the Abbe.

"Ah! the /scelerat/!" said Philip, smiling, "'tis a sad dog, but very clever and /loves me/, he would be incomparable, if he were but decently honest."

"At least," said I, "he is no hypocrite, and that is some praise."

"Hem!" ejaculated the Duke, very slowly, and then, after a pause, he said, "Count, I have a real kindness for you, and I will therefore give you a piece of advice: think as well of Dubois as you can, and address him as if he were all you endeavoured to fancy him."

After this hint, which in the mouth of any prince but Philip of Orleans would have been not a little remarkable for its want of dignity, my prospects did not seem much brighter; however, I was not discouraged.

"The Abbe," said I, respectfully, "is a choleric man: one /may/ displease him; but dare I hope that so long as I preserve inviolate my zeal and my attachment to the interests and the person of your Highness, no—"

The Regent interrupted me. "You mean nobody shall successfully misrepresent you to me? No, Count" (and here the Regent spoke with the earnestness and dignity, which, when he did assume, few wore with a nobler grace)—"no, Count, I make a distinction between those who minister to the state and those who minister to me. I consider your services too valuable to the former to put them at the mercy of the latter. And now that the conversation has turned upon business I wish to speak to you about this scheme of Gortz."

After a prolonged conference with the Regent upon matters of business, in which his deep penetration into human nature not a little surprised me, I went away thoroughly satisfied with my visit. I should not have been so had I added to my other accomplishments the gift of prophecy. Above five days after this interview, I thought it would be but prudent to pay the Abbe Dubois one of those visits of homage which it was already become policy to pay him. "If I go," thought I, "it will seem as if nothing had happened; if I stay away, it will seem as if I attached importance to a scene I should appear to have forgotten."

It so happened that the Abbe had a very unusual visitor that morning, in the person of the austere but admirable Duc de St. Simon. There was a singular and almost invariable distinction in the Regent's mind between one kind of regard and another. His regard for one order of persons always arose either out of his vices or his indolence; his regard for another, out of his good qualities and his strong sense. The Duc de St. Simon held the same place in the latter species of affection that Dubois did in the former. The Duc was just coming out of the Abbe's closet as I entered the anteroom. He paused to speak to me, while Dubois, who had followed the Duc out, stopped for one moment, and surveyed me with a

look like a thundercloud. I did not appear to notice it, but St. Simon did.

"That look," said he, as Dubois, beckoning to a gentleman to accompany him to his closet, once more disappeared, "that look bodes you no good, Count."

Pride is an elevation which is a spring-board at one time and a stumbling-block at another. It was with me more often the stumbling-block than the spring-board. "Monseigneur le Duc," said I, haughtily enough, and rather in too loud a tone considering the chamber was pretty full, "in no court to which Morton Devereux proffers his services shall his fortune depend upon the looks of a low-born insolent or a profligate priest."

St. Simon smiled sardonically. "Monsieur le Comte," said he, rather civilly, "I honour your sentiments, and I wish you success in the world—and a lower voice."

I was going to say something by way of retort, for I was in a very bad humour, but I checked myself: "I need not," thought I, "make two enemies, if I can help it."

"I shall never," I replied gravely, "I shall never despair, so long as the Duc de St. Simon lives, of winning by the same arts the favour of princes and the esteem of good men."

The Duc was flattered, and replied suitably, but he very soon afterwards went away. I was resolved that I would not go till I had fairly seen what sort of reception the Abbe would give me. I did not wait long. he came out of his closet, and standing in his usual rude manner with his back to the fireplace, received the addresses and compliments of his visitors. I was not in a hurry to present myself, but I did so at last with a familiar yet rather respectful air. Dubois looked at me from head to foot, and abruptly turning his back upon me, said with an oath, to a courtier who stood next to him,—"The plagues of Pharaoh are come again; only instead of Egyptian frogs in our chambers, we have the still more troublesome guests,—English adventurers!"

Somehow or other my compliments rarely tell; I am lavish enough of them, but they generally have the air of sarcasms; thank Heaven, however, no one can accuse me of ever wanting a rude answer to a rude speech. "Ha! ha! ha!" said I now, in answer to Dubois, with a courteous laugh, "you have an excellent wit, Abbe. /A propos/ of adventures, I met a Monsieur St. Laurent, Principal of the Institution of St. Michael, the other day. 'Count,' said he, hearing I was going to Paris, 'you can do me an especial favour!' 'What is it?' said I. 'Why, a cast-off valet of mine is living at Paris; he would have gone long since to the galleys, if he had not taken sanctuary in the Church: if ever you meet him, give him a good horsewhipping on my account; his name is William Dubois.' 'Depend

upon it,' answered I to Monsieur St. Laurent, 'that if he is servant to any one not belonging to the royal family, I will fulfil your errand, and horsewhip him soundly; if /in/ the service of the royal family, why, respect for his masters must oblige me to content myself with putting all persons on their guard against a little rascal, who retains, in all situations, the manners of the apothecary's son and the roguery of the director's valet.'"

All the time I was relating this charming little anecdote, it would have been amusing to the last degree to note the horrified countenances of the surrounding gentlemen. Dubois was too confounded, too aghast, to interrupt me, and I left the room before a single syllable was uttered. Had Dubois at that time been, what he was afterwards, cardinal and prime minister, I should in all probability have had permanent lodgings in the Bastile in return for my story. Even as it was, the Abbe was not so grateful as he ought to have been for my taking so much pains to amuse him! In spite of my anger on leaving the favourite, I did not forget my prudence, and accordingly I hastened to the Prince. When the Regent admitted me, I flung myself on my knee, and told him, /verbatim/, all that had happened. The Regent, who seems to have had very little real liking for Dubois, could not help laughing when I ludicrously described to him the universal consternation my anecdote had excited.

On the death of Dubois, the Regent wrote to the Count de Noce, whom he had banished for an indiscreet expression against the favourite, uttered at one of his private suppers: "With the beast dies the venom: I expect you to-night to supper at the Palais Royal."

"Courage, my dear Count," said he, kindly, "you have nothing to fear; return home and count upon an embassy!"

I relied on the royal word, returned to my lodgings, and spent the evening with Chaulieu and Fontenelle. The next day the Duc de St. Simon paid me a visit. After a little preliminary conversation, he unburdened the secret with which he was charged. I was desired to leave Paris in forty-eight hours.

"Believe me," said St. Simon, "that this message was not intrusted to me by the Regent without great reluctance. He sends you many condescending and kind messages; says he shall always both esteem and like you, and hopes to see you again, some time or other, at the Palais Royal. Moreover, he desires the message to be private, and has intrusted it to me in especial, because hearing that I had a kindness for you, and knowing I had a hatred for Dubois, he thought I should be the least unwelcome messenger of such disagreeable tidings. 'To tell you the truth, St. Simon,' said the Regent, laughing, 'I only consent to have him banished, from a firm conviction that if I do not Dubois will take some opportunity of having him beheaded.'"

"Pray," said I, smiling with a tolerably good grace, "pray give my most

grateful and humble thanks to his Highness, for his very considerate and kind foresight. I could not have chosen better for myself than his Highness has chosen for me: my only regret on quitting France is at leaving a prince so affable as Philip and a courtier so virtuous as St. Simon."

Though the good Duc went every year to the Abbey de la Trappe for the purpose of mortifying his sins and preserving his religion in so impious an atmosphere as the Palais Royal, he was not above flattery; and he expressed himself towards me with particular kindness after my speech.

At court, one becomes a sort of human ant-bear, and learns to catch one's prey by one's tongue.

After we had eased ourselves a little by abusing Dubois, the Duc took his leave in order to allow me time to prepare for my "journey," as he politely called it. Before he left, he, however, asked me whither my course would be bent? I told him that I should take my chance with the Czar Peter, and see if his czarship thought the same esteem was due to the disgraced courtier as to the favoured diplomatist.

That night I received a letter from St. Simon, enclosing one addressed with all due form to the Czar. "You will consider the enclosed," wrote St. Simon, "a fresh proof of the Regent's kindness to you; it is a most flattering testimonial in your favour, and cannot fail to make the Czar anxious to secure your services."

I was not a little touched by a kindness so unusual in princes to their discarded courtiers, and this entirely reconciled me to a change of scene which, indeed, under any other circumstances, my somewhat morbid love for action and variety would have induced me rather to relish than dislike.

Within thirty-six hours from the time of dismissal, I had turned my back upon the French capital.

CHAPTER VI.

A LONG INTERVAL OF YEARS.—A CHANGE OF MIND AND ITS CAUSES.

THE last accounts received of the Czar reported him to be at Dantzic. He had, however, quitted that place when I arrived there. I lost no time in following him, and presented myself to his Majesty one day after his dinner, when he was sitting with one leg in the Czarina's lap and a bottle of the best /eau de vie/ before him. I had chosen my time well; he received me most graciously, read my letter from the Regent—about

which, remembering the fate of Bellerophon, I had had certain apprehensions, but which proved to be in the highest degree complimentary—and then declared himself extremely happy to see me again. However parsimonious Peter generally was towards foreigners, I never had ground for personal complaint on that score. The very next day I was appointed to a post of honour and profit about the royal person; from this I was transferred to a military station, in which I rose with great rapidity; and I was only occasionally called from my warlike duties to be intrusted with diplomatic missions of the highest confidence and importance.

It is this portion of my life—a portion of nine years to the time of the Czar's death—that I shall, in this history, the most concentrate and condense. In truth, were I to dwell upon it at length, I should make little more than a mere record of political events; differing, in some respects, it is true, from the received histories of the time, but containing nothing to compensate in utility for the want of interest. That this was the exact age for adventurers, Alberoni and Dubois are sufficient proofs. Never was there a more stirring, active, restless period; never one in which the genius of intrigue was so pervadingly at work. I was not less fortunate than my brethren. Although scarcely four and twenty when I entered the Czar's service, my habits of intimacy with men much older; my customary gravity, reserve, and thought; my freedom, since Isora's death, from youthful levity or excess; my early entrance into the world; and a countenance prematurely marked with the lines of reflection and sobered by its hue,—made me appear considerably older than I was. I kept my own counsel, and affected to be so: youth is a great enemy to one's success; and more esteem is often bestowed upon a wrinkled brow than a plodding brain.

All the private intelligence which during this space of time I had received from England was far from voluminous. My mother still enjoyed the quiet of her religious retreat. A fire, arising from the negligence of a servant, had consumed nearly the whole of Devereux Court (the fine old house! till /that/ went, I thought even England held one friend). Upon this accident, Gerald had gone to London; and, though there was now no doubt of his having been concerned in the Rebellion of 1715, he had been favourably received at court, and was already renowned throughout London for his pleasures, his excesses, and his munificent profusion.

Montreuil, whose lot seemed to be always to lose by intrigue what he gained by the real solidity of his genius, had embarked very largely in the rash but gigantic schemes of Gortz and Alberoni; schemes which, had they succeeded, would not only have placed a new king upon the English throne, but wrought an utter change over the whole face of Europe. With Alberoni and with Gortz fell Montreuil. He was banished France and Spain; the penalty of death awaited him in Britain; and he was supposed to have thrown himself into some convent in Italy, where his name and his character were unknown. In this brief intelligence was condensed all my information of the actors in my first scenes of life. I return

to that scene on which I had now entered.

At the age of thirty-three I had acquired a reputation sufficient to content my ambition; my fortune was larger than my wants; I was a favourite in courts; I had been successful in camps; I had already obtained all that would have rewarded the whole lives of many men superior to myself in merit, more ardent than myself in desires. I was still young; my appearance, though greatly altered, manhood had rather improved than impaired. I had not forestalled my constitution by excesses, nor worn dry the sources of pleasure by too large a demand upon their capacities; why was it then, at that golden age, in the very prime and glory of manhood, in the very zenith and summer of success, that a deep, dark, pervading melancholy fell upon me? a melancholy so gloomy that it seemed to me as a thick and impenetrable curtain drawn gradually between myself and the blessed light of human enjoyment. A torpor crept upon me; an indolent, heavy, clinging languor gathered over my whole frame, the physical and the mental: I sat for hours without book, paper, object, thought, gazing on vacancy, stirring not, feeling not,—yes, feeling, but feeling only one sensation, a sick, sad, drooping despondency, a sinking in of the heart, a sort of gnawing within as if something living were twisted round my vitals, and, finding no other food, preyed, though with a sickly and dull maw, upon /them/. This disease came upon me slowly: it was not till the beginning of the second year, from its obvious and palpable commencement, that it grew to the height that I have described. It began with a distaste to all that I had been accustomed to enjoy or to pursue. Music, which I had always passionately loved, though from some defect in the organs of hearing, I was incapable of attaining the smallest knowledge of the science, music lost all its diviner spells, all its properties of creating a new existence, a life of dreaming and vain luxuries, within the mind: it became only a monotonous sound, less grateful to the languor of my faculties than an utter and dead stillness. I had never been what is generally termed a boon companion; but I had had the social vanities, if not the social tastes; I had insensibly loved the board which echoed with applause at my sallies, and the comrades who, while they deprecated my satire, had been complaisant enough to hail it as wit. One of my weaknesses is a love of show, and I had gratified a feeling not the less cherished because it arose from a petty source, in obtaining for my equipages, my mansion, my banquets, the celebrity which is given no less to magnificence than to fame: now I grew indifferent alike to the signs of pomp, and to the baubles of taste; praise fell upon a listless ear, and (rare pitch of satiety!) the pleasures that are the offspring of our foibles delighted me no more. I had early learned from Bolingbroke a love for the converse of men, eminent, whether for wisdom or for wit: the graceful /badinage,/ or the keen critique; the sparkling flight of the winged words which circled and rebounded from lip to lip, or the deep speculation upon the mysterious and unravelled wonders of man, of Nature, and the world; the light maxim upon manners, or the sage inquiry into the mines of learning, all and each had possessed a link to bind my temper and my tastes to the graces and fascination of social life. Now

a new spirit entered within me: the smile faded from my lip, and the jest departed from my tongue; memory seemed no less treacherous than fancy, and deserted me the instant I attempted to enter into those contests of knowledge in which I had been not undistinguished before. I grew confused and embarrassed in speech; my words expressed a sense utterly different to that which I had intended to convey; and at last, as my apathy increased, I sat at my own board, silent and lifeless, freezing into ice the very powers and streams of converse which I had once been the foremost to circulate and to warm.

At the time I refer to, I was Minister at one of the small Continental courts, where life is a round of unmeaning etiquette and wearisome ceremonials, a daily labour of trifles, a ceaseless pageantry of nothings. I had been sent there upon one important event; the business resulting from it had soon ceased, and all the duties that remained for me to discharge were of a negative and passive nature. Nothing that could arouse, nothing that could occupy faculties that had for years been so perpetually wound up to a restless excitement, was left for me in this terrible reservoir of /ennui/. I had come thither at once from the skirmishing and wild warfare of a Tartar foe; a war in which, though the glory was obscure, the action was perpetual and exciting. I had come thither, and the change was as if I had passed from a mountain stream to a stagnant pool. Society at this court reminded me of a state funeral: everything was pompous and lugubrious, even to the drapery—even to the feathers—which, in other scenes, would have been consecrated to associations of levity or of grace; the hourly pageant swept on slow, tedious, mournful, and the object of the attendants was only to entomb the Pleasure which they affected celebrate. What a change for the wild, the strange, the novel, the intriguing, the varying life, which, whether in courts or camps, I had hitherto led! The internal change that came over myself is scarcely to be wondered at; the winds stood still, and the straw they had blown from quarter to quarter, whether in anger or in sport, began to moulder upon the spot where they had left it.

From this cessation of the aims, hopes, and thoughts of life I was awakened by the spreading, as it were, of another disease: the dead, dull, aching pain at my heart was succeeded by one acute and intense; the absence of thought gave way to one thought more terrible, more dark, more despairing than any which had haunted me since the first year of Isora's death; and from a numbness and pause, as it were, of existence, existence became too keen and intolerable a sense. I will enter into an explanation.

At the court of —, there was an Italian, not uncelebrated for his wisdom, nor unbeloved for an innocence and integrity of life rarely indeed to be met with among his countrymen. The acquaintance of this man, who was about fifty years of age, and who was devoted almost exclusively to the pursuit of philosophical science, I had sedulously cultivated. His conversation pleased me; his wisdom improved; and his

benevolence, which reminded me of the traits of La Fontaine, it was so infantine, made me incline to love him. Upon the growth of the fearful malady of mind which seized me, I had discontinued my visits and my invitations to the Italian; and Bezoni (so was he called) felt a little offended by my neglect. As soon, however, as he discovered my state of mind, the good man's resentment left him. He forced himself upon my solitude, and would sit by me whole evenings,—sometimes without exchanging a word, sometimes with vain attempts to interest, to arouse, or to amuse me.

At last, one evening—it was the era of a fearful suffering to me—our conversation turned upon those subjects which are at once the most important and the most rarely discussed. We spoke of /religion/. We first talked upon the theology of revealed religion. As Bezoni warmed into candour, I perceived that his doctrines differed from my own, and that he inly disbelieved that divine creed which Christians profess to adore. From a dispute on the ground of faith, we came to one upon the more debatable ground of reason. We turned from the subject of revealed to that of natural religion; and we entered long and earnestly into that grandest of all earthly speculations,—the metaphysical proofs of the immortality of the soul. Again the sentiments of Bezoni were opposed to mine. He was a believer in the dark doctrine which teaches that man is dust and that all things are forgotten in the grave. He expressed his opinions with a clearness and precision the more impressive because totally devoid of cavil and of rhetoric. I listened in silence, but with a deep and most chilling dismay. Even now I think I see the man as he sat before me, the light of the lamp falling on his high forehead and dark features; even now I think I hear his calm, low voice—the silver voice of his country—stealing to my heart, and withering the only pure and unsullied hope which I yet cherished there.

Bezoni left me, unconscious of the anguish he bequeathed me, to think over all he had said. I did not sleep nor even retire to bed. I laid my head upon my hands, and surrendered myself to turbulent yet intense reflection. Every man who has lived much in the world, and conversed with its various tribes, has, I fear, met with many who, on this momentous subject, profess the same tenets as Bezoni. But he was the first person I had met of that sect who had evidently thought long and deeply upon the creed he had embraced. He was not a voluptuary nor a boaster nor a wit. He had not been misled by the delusions either of vanity or of the senses. He was a man pure, innocent, modest, full of all tender charities and meek dispositions towards mankind: it was evidently his interest to believe in a future state; he could have had nothing to fear from it. Not a single passion did he cherish which the laws of another world would have condemned. Add to this, what I have observed before, that he was not a man fond of the display of intellect, nor one that brought to the discussions of wisdom the artillery of wit. He was grave, humble, and self-diffident, beyond all beings. I would have given a kingdom to have found something in the advocate by which I could have condemned the cause: I could not, and I was wretched.

I spent the whole of the next week among my books. I ransacked whatever in my scanty library the theologians had written or the philosophers had bequeathed upon that mighty secret. I arranged their arguments in my mind. I armed myself with their weapons. I felt my heart spring joyously within me as I felt the strength I had acquired, and I sent to the philosopher to visit me, that I might conquer and confute him. He came; but he spoke with pain and reluctance. He saw that I had taken the matter far more deeply to heart than he could have supposed it possible in a courtier and a man of fortune and the world. Little did he know of me or my secret soul. I broke down his reserve at last. I unrolled my arguments. I answered his, and we spent the whole night in controversy. He left me, and I was more bewildered than ever.

To speak truth, he had devoted years to the subject: I had devoted only a week. He had come to his conclusions step by step; he had reached the great ultimatum with slowness, with care, and, he confessed, with anguish and with reluctance. What a match was I, who brought a hasty temper, and a limited reflection on that subject to a reasoner like this? His candour staggered and chilled me even more than his logic. Arguments that occurred not to me, upon my side of the question, /he/ stated at length and with force; I heard, and, till he replied to them, I deemed they were unanswerable: the reply came, and I had no counter-word. A meeting of this nature was often repeated; and when he left me, tears crept into my wild eyes, my heart melted within me, and I wept!

I must now enter more precisely than I have yet done into my state of mind upon religious matters at the time this dispute with the Italian occurred. To speak candidly, I had been far less shocked with his opposition to me upon matters of doctrinal faith than with that upon matters of abstract reasoning. Bred a Roman Catholic, though pride, consistency, custom, made me externally adhere to the Papal Church, I inly perceived its errors and smiled at its superstitions. And in the busy world, where so little but present objects or /human/ anticipations of the future engross the attention, I had never given the subject that consideration which would have enabled me (as it has since) to separate the dogmas of the priest from the precepts of the Saviour, and thus confirmed my belief as the Christian by the very means which would have loosened it as the Sectarian. So that at the time Bezoni knew me a certain indifference to—perhaps arising from an ignorance of—doctrinal points, rendered me little hurt by arguments against opinions which I embraced indeed, but with a lukewarm and imperfect affection. But it was far otherwise upon abstract points of reasoning, far otherwise, when the hope of surviving this frail and most unhallowed being was to be destroyed: I might have been indifferent to cavil upon /what/ was the word of God, but never to question of the justice of God Himself. In the whole world there was not a more ardent believer in our imperishable nature, nor one more deeply interested in the belief. Do not let it be supposed that because I have not often recurred to Isora's death (or

because I have continued my history in a jesting and light tone) that that event ever passed from the memory which it had turned to bitterness and gall. Never in the masses of intrigue, in the festivals of pleasure, in the tumults of ambition, in the blaze of a licentious court, or by the rude tents of a barbarous host,—never, my buried love, had I forgotten thee! That remembrance, had no other cause existed, would have led me to God. Every night, in whatever toils or whatever objects, whatever failures or triumphs, the day had been consumed; every night before I laid my head upon my widowed and lonely pillow,—I had knelt down and lifted my heart to Heaven, blending the hopes of that Heaven with the memory and the vision of Isora. Prayer had seemed to me a commune not only with the living God, but with the dead by whom His dwelling is surrounded. Pleasant and soft was it to turn to one thought, to which all the holiest portions of my nature clung between the wearying acts of this hard and harsh drama of existence. Even the bitterness of Isora's early and unavenged death passed away when I thought of the heaven to which she was gone, and in which, though I journeyed now through sin and travail and recked little if the paths of others differed from my own, I yet trusted with a solemn trust that I should meet her at last. There was I to merit her with a love as undying, and at length as pure, as her own. It was this that at the stated hour in which, after my prayer for our reunion, I surrendered my spirit to the bright and wild visions of her far, but /not impassable/ home,—it was this which for that single hour made all around me a paradise of delighted thoughts! It was not the little earth, nor the cold sky, nor the changing wave, nor the perishable turf,—no, nor the dead wall and the narrow chamber,—which were around me then! No dreamer ever was so far from the localities of flesh and life as I was in that enchanted hour: a light seemed to settle upon all things around me; her voice murmured on my ear, her kisses melted on my brow; I shut my eyes, and I fancied that I beheld her.

Wherefore was this comfort? Whence came the spell which admitted me to this fairy land? What was the source of the hope and the rapture and the delusion? Was it not the deep certainty that /Isora yet existed/; that her spirit, her nature, her love were preserved, were inviolate, were the same? That they watched over me yet, that she knew that in that hour I was with her, that she felt my prayer, that even then she anticipated the moment when my soul should burst the human prison-house and be once more blended with her own?

What! and was this to be no more? Were those mystic and sweet revealings to be mute to me forever? Were my thoughts of Isora to be henceforth bounded to the charnel-house and the worm? Was she indeed /no more/? /No more/, oh, intolerable despair! Why, there was not a thing I had once known, not a dog that I had caressed, not a book that I had read, which I could know that I should see /no more/, and, knowing, not feel something of regret. No more! were we, indeed, parted forever and forever? Had she gone in her young years, with her warm affections, her new hopes, all green and unwithered at her heart, at once into dust,

stillness, ice? And had I known her only for one year, one little year, to see her torn from me by a violent and bloody death, and to be left a mourner in this vast and eternal charnel, without a solitary consolation or a gleam of hope? Was the earth to be henceforth a mere mass conjured from the bones and fattened by the clay of our dead sires? Were the stars and the moon to be mere atoms and specks of a chill light, no longer worlds, which the ardent spirit might hereafter reach and be fitted to enjoy? Was the heaven—the tender, blue, loving heaven, in whose far regions I had dreamed was Isora's home, and had, therefore, grown better and happier when I gazed upon it—to be nothing but cloud and air? and had the love which had seemed so immortal, and so springing from that which had not blent itself with mortality, been but a gross lamp fed only by the properties of a brute nature, and placed in a dark cell of clay, to glimmer, to burn, and to expire with the frail walls which it had illumined? Dust, death, worms,—were these the heritage of love and hope, of thought, of passion, of all that breathed and kindled and exalted and /created/ within?

Could I contemplate this idea; could I believe it possible? /I could not/. But against the abstract, the logical arguments for this idea, had I a reply? I shudder as I write that at that time I had not! I endeavoured to fix my whole thoughts to the study of those subtle reasonings which I had hitherto so imperfectly conned: but my mind was jarring, irresolute, bewildered, confused; my stake seemed too vast to allow me coolness for the game.

Whoever has had cause for some refined and deep study in the midst of the noisy and loud world may perhaps readily comprehend that feeling which now possessed me; a feeling that it was utterly impossible to abstract and concentrate one's thoughts, while at the mercy of every intruder, and fevered and fretful by every disturbance. Men early and long accustomed to mingle such reflections with the avocations of courts and cities have grown callous to these interruptions, and it has been in the very heart of the multitude that the profoundest speculations have been cherished and produced; but I was not of this mould. The world, which before had been distasteful, now grew insufferable; I longed for some seclusion, some utter solitude, some quiet and unpenetrated nook, that I might give my undivided mind to the knowledge of these things, and build the tower of divine reasonings by which I might ascend to heaven. It was at this time, and in the midst of my fiercest internal conflict, that the great Czar died, and I was suddenly recalled to Russia.

"Now," I said, when I heard of my release, "now shall my wishes be fulfilled!"

I sent to Bezoni. He came, but he refused, as indeed he had for some time done, to speak to me further upon the question which so wildly engrossed me. "I forgive you," said I, when we parted, "I forgive you for all that you have cost me: I feel that the moment is now at hand

when my faith shall frame a weapon wherewith to triumph over yours!"

Father in Heaven! thanks be to Thee that my doubts were at last removed, and the cloud rolled away from my soul.

Bezoni embraced me, and wept over me. "All good men," said he, "have a mighty interest in your success; for me there is nothing dark, even in the mute grave, if it covers the ashes of one who has loved and served his brethren, and done, with a wilful heart, no living creature wrong."

Soon afterwards the Italian lost his life in attending the victims of a fearful and contagious disease, whom even the regular practitioners of the healing art hesitated to visit.

At this moment I am, in the strictest acceptation of the words, a believer and a Christian. I have neither anxiety nor doubt upon the noblest and the most comforting of all creeds, and I am grateful, among the other blessings which faith has brought me,—I am grateful that it has brought me CHARITY! Dark to all human beings was Bezoni's doctrine,—dark, above all, to those who have mourned on earth; so withering to all the hopes which cling the most enduringly to the heart was his unhappy creed that he who knows how inseparably, though insensibly, our moral legislation is woven with our supposed self-interest will scarcely marvel at, even while he condemns, the unwise and unholy persecution which that creed universally sustains! Many a most wretched hour, many a pang of agony and despair, did those doctrines inflict upon myself; but I know that the intention of Bezoni was benevolence and that the practice of his life was virtue: and while my reason tells me that God will not punish the reluctant and involuntary error of one to whom all God's creatures were so dear, my religion bids me hope that I shall meet him in that world where no error /is/, and where the Great Spirit to whom all human passions are unknown avenges the momentary doubt of His justice by a proof of the infinity of His mercy.