

Memoirs of Casanova — Volume 25: Russia and Poland eBook

Memoirs of Casanova — Volume 25: Russia and Poland by Giacomo Casanova

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Memoirs of Casanova — Volume 25: Russia and Poland eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	6
Page 1.....	7
Page 2.....	8
Page 3.....	10
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	12
Page 6.....	13
Page 7.....	14
Page 8.....	16
Page 9.....	18
Page 10.....	20
Page 11.....	22
Page 12.....	24
Page 13.....	25
Page 14.....	27
Page 15.....	29
Page 16.....	31
Page 17.....	33
Page 18.....	34
Page 19.....	35
Page 20.....	37
Page 21.....	38
Page 22.....	39

Page 23.....	40
Page 24.....	42
Page 25.....	43
Page 26.....	44
Page 27.....	45
Page 28.....	47
Page 29.....	49
Page 30.....	51
Page 31.....	52
Page 32.....	53
Page 33.....	54
Page 34.....	56
Page 35.....	58
Page 36.....	60
Page 37.....	62
Page 38.....	64
Page 39.....	66
Page 40.....	68
Page 41.....	69
Page 42.....	70
Page 43.....	72
Page 44.....	74
Page 45.....	76
Page 46.....	77
Page 47.....	78
Page 48.....	79

Page 49.....	81
Page 50.....	83
Page 51.....	85
Page 52.....	87
Page 53.....	89
Page 54.....	91
Page 55.....	93
Page 56.....	94
Page 57.....	96
Page 58.....	98
Page 59.....	100
Page 60.....	102
Page 61.....	104
Page 62.....	106
Page 63.....	108
Page 64.....	110
Page 65.....	112
Page 66.....	114
Page 67.....	116
Page 68.....	117
Page 69.....	119
Page 70.....	121
Page 71.....	122
Page 72.....	124
Page 73.....	126
Page 74.....	128

Page 75.....	130
Page 76.....	132
Page 77.....	134
Page 78.....	136
Page 79.....	138
Page 80.....	140
Page 81.....	142
Page 82.....	143

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
CHAPTER XIX		1
CHAPTER XX		15
CHAPTER XXI		29
CHAPTER XXII		46
CHAPTER XXIII		69

Page 1

CHAPTER XIX

My Stay at Riga—Campioni St. Heleine—D'Asagon—Arrival of the Empress—I Leave Riga and Go to St. Petersburg—I See Society—I Buy Zaira

Prince Charles de Biron, the younger son of the Duke of Courland, Major-General in the Russian service, Knight of the Order of St. Alexander Newski, gave me a distinguished reception after reading his father's letter. He was thirty-six years of age, pleasant-looking without being handsome, and polite and well-mannered, and he spoke French extremely well. In a few sentences he let me know what he could do for me if I intended to spend some time at Riga. His table, his friends, his pleasures, his horses, his advice, and his purse, all these were at my service, and he offered them with the frankness of the soldier and the geniality of the prince.

"I cannot offer you a lodging," he said, "because I have hardly enough room for myself, but I will see that you get a comfortable apartment somewhere."

The apartment was soon found, and I was taken to it by one of the prince's aides-de-camp. I was scarcely established when the prince came to see me, and made me dine with him just as I was. It was an unceremonious dinner, and I was pleased to meet Campioni, of whom I have spoken several times in these Memoirs. He was a dancer, but very superior to his fellows, and fit for the best company polite, witty, intelligent, and a libertine in a gentlemanly way. He was devoid of prejudices, and fond of women, good cheer, and heavy play, and knew how to keep an even mind both in good and evil fortune. We were mutually pleased to see each other again.

Another guest, a certain Baron de St. Heleine from Savoy, had a pretty but very insignificant wife. The baron, a fat man, was a gamester, a gourmand, and a lover of wine; add that he was a past master in the art of getting into debt and lulling his creditors into a state of false security, and you have all his capacities, for in all other respects he was a fool in the fullest sense of the word. An aide-de-camp and the prince's mistress also dined with us. This mistress, who was pale, thin, and dreamy-looking, but also pretty, might be twenty years old. She hardly ate anything, saying that she was ill and did not like anything on the table. Discontent shewed itself on her every feature. The prince endeavoured, but all in vain, to make her eat and drink, she refused everything disdainfully. The prince laughed good-humouredly at her in such a manner as not to wound her feelings.

We spent two hours pleasantly enough at table, and after coffee had been served, the prince, who had business, shook me by the hand and left me with Campioni, telling me always to regard his table as my last resource.

Page 2

This old friend and fellow-countryman took me to his house to introduce me to his wife and family. I did not know that he had married a second time. I found the so-called wife to be an Englishwoman, thin, but full of intelligence. She had a daughter of eleven, who might easily have been taken for fifteen; she, too, was marvellously intelligent, and danced, sang, and played on the piano and gave such glances that shewed that nature had been swifter than her years. She made a conquest of me, and her father congratulated me to my delight, but her mother offended her dreadfully by calling her baby.

I went for a walk with Campioni, who gave me a good deal of information, beginning with himself.

"I have lived for ten years," he said, "with that woman. Betty, whom you admired so much, is not my daughter, the others are my children by my Englishwoman. I have left St. Petersburg for two years, and I live here well enough, and have pupils who do me credit. I play with the prince, sometimes winning and sometimes losing, but I never win enough to enable me to satisfy a wretched creditor I left at St. Petersburg, who persecutes me on account of a bill of exchange. He may put me in prison any day, and I am always expecting him to do so."

"Is the bill for a large sum?"

"Five hundred roubles."

"That is only two thousand francs."

"Yes, but unfortunately I have not got it."

"You ought to annul the debt by paying small sums on account."

"The rascal won't let me."

"Then what do you propose doing?"

"Win a heavy sum, if I can, and escape into Poland."

"The Baron de St. Heleine will run away, too if he can, for he only lives on credit. The prince is very useful to us, as we are able to play at his house; but if we get into difficulty he could not extricate us, as he is heavily in debt himself. He always loses at play. His mistress is expensive, and gives him a great deal of trouble by her ill-humour."

"Why is she so sour?"

"She wants him to keep his word, for he promised to get her married at the end of two years; and on the strength of this promise she let him give her two children. The two



years have passed by and the children are there, and she will no longer allow him to have anything to do with her for fear of having a third child."

"Can't the prince find her a husband?"

"He did find her a lieutenant, but she won't hear of anybody under the rank of major."

The prince gave a state dinner to General Woyakoff (for whom I had a letter), Baroness Korf, Madame Ittinoff, and to a young lady who was going to marry Baron Budberg, whom I had known at Florence, Turin, and Augsburg, and whom I may possibly have forgotten to mention.

All these friends made me spend three weeks very pleasantly, and I was especially pleased with old General Woyakoff. This worthy man had been at Venice fifty years before, when the Russians were still called Muscovites, and the founder of St. Petersburg was still alive. He had grown old like an oak, without changing his horizons. He thought the world was just the same as it had been when he was young, and was eloquent in his praise of the Venetian Government, imagining it to be still the same as he had left it.

Page 3

At Riga an English merchant named Collins told me that the so-called Baron de Stenau, who had given me the forged bill of exchange, had been hanged in Portugal. This "baron" was a poor clerk, and the son of a small tradesman, and had left his desk in search of adventure, and thus he had ended. May God have mercy upon his soul!

One evening a Russian, on his way from Poland, where he had been executing some commission for the Russian Court, called on the prince, played, and lost twenty thousand roubles on his word of honour. Campioni was the dealer. The Russian gave bills of exchange in payment of his debts; but as soon as he got to St. Petersburg he dishonoured his own bills, and declared them worthless, not caring for his honour or good faith. The result of this piece of knavery was not only that his creditors were defrauded, but gaming was henceforth strictly forbidden in the officers' quarters.

This Russian was the same that betrayed the secrets of Elizabeth Petrovna, when she was at war with Prussia. He communicated to Peter, the empress's nephew and heir-presumptive, all the orders she sent to her generals, and Peter in his turn passed on the information to the Prussian king whom he worshipped.

On the death of Elizabeth, Peter put this traitor at the head of the department for commerce, and the fellow actually made known, with the Czar's sanction, the service for which he had received such a reward, and thus, instead of looking upon his conduct as disgraceful, he gloried over it. Peter could not have been aware of the fact that, though it is sometimes necessary to reward treachery, the traitor himself is always abhorred and despised.

I have remarked that it was Campioni who dealt, but he dealt for the prince who held the bank. I had certain claims, but as I remarked that I expected nothing and would gladly sell my expectations for a hundred roubles, the prince took me at my word and gave me the amount immediately. Thus I was the only person who made any money by our night's play.

Catherine II, wishing to shew herself to her new subjects, over whom she was in reality supreme, though she had put the ghost of a king in the person of Stanislas Poniatowski, her former favourite, on the throne of Poland, came to Riga, and it was then I saw this great sovereign for the first time. I was a witness of the kindness and affability with which she treated the Livonian nobility, and of the way in which she kissed the young ladies, who had come to kiss her hand, upon the mouth. She was surrounded by the Orloffs and by other nobles who had assisted in placing her on the throne. For the comfort and pleasure of her loyal subjects the empress graciously expressed her intention of holding a bank at faro of ten thousand roubles.

Page 4

Instantly the table and the cards were brought forward, and the piles of gold placed in order. She took the cards, pretended to shuffle them, and gave them to the first comer to cut. She had the pleasure of seeing her bank broken at the first deal, and indeed this result was to be expected, as anybody not an absolute idiot could see how the cards were going. The next day the empress set out for Mitau, where triumphal arches were erected in her honour. They were made of wood, as stone is scarce in Poland, and indeed there would not have been time to build stone arches.

The day after her arrival great alarm prevailed, for news came that a revolution was ready to burst out at St. Petersburg, and some even said that it had begun. The rebels wished to have forth from his prison the hapless Ivan Ivanovitz, who had been proclaimed emperor in his cradle, and dethroned by Elizabeth Petrovna. Two officers to whom the guardianship of the prince had been confided had killed the poor innocent monarch when they saw that they would be overpowered.

The assassination of the innocent prince created such a sensation that the wary Panin, fearing for the results, sent courier after courier to the empress urging her to return to St. Petersburg and shew herself to the people.

Catherine was thus obliged to leave Mitau twenty-four hours after she had entered it, and after hastening back to the capital she arrived only to find that the excitement had entirely subsided. For politic reasons the assassins of the wretched Ivan were rewarded, and the bold man who had endeavoured to rise by her fall was beheaded.

The report ran that Catherine had concerted the whole affair with the assassins, but this was speedily set down as a calumny. The czarina was strong-minded, but neither cruel nor perfidious. When I saw her at Riga she was thirty-five, and had reigned two years. She was not precisely handsome, but nevertheless her appearance was pleasing, her expression kindly, and there was about her an air of calm and tranquillity which never left her.

At about the same time a friend of Baron de St. Heleine arrived from St. Petersburg on his way to Warsaw. His name was Marquis Dragon, but he called himself d'Aragon. He came from Naples, was a great gamester, a skilled swordsman, and was always ready to extract himself from a difficulty by a duel. He had left St. Petersburg because the Orloffs had persuaded the empress to prohibit games of chance. It was thought strange that the prohibition should come from the Orloffs, as gaming had been their principal means of gaining a livelihood before they entered on the more dangerous and certainly not more honourable profession of conspiracy. However, this measure was really a sensible one. Having been gamesters themselves they knew that gamesters are mostly knaves, and always ready to enter into any intrigue or conspiracy provided it assures them some small gain; there could not have been better judges of gaming and its consequences than they were.

Page 5

But though a gamester may be a rogue he may still have a good heart, and it is only just to say that this was the case with the Orloffs. Alexis gained the slash which adorns his face in a tavern, and the man who gave the blow had just lost to him a large sum of money, and considered his opponent's success to be rather the result of dexterity than fortune. When Alexis became rich and powerful, instead of revenging himself, he hastened to make his enemy's fortune. This was nobly done.

Dragon, whose first principle was always to turn up the best card, and whose second principle was never to shirk a duel, had gone to St. Petersburg in 1759 with the Baron de St. Heleine. Elizabeth was still on the throne, but Peter, Duke of Holstein, the heir-presumptive, had already begun to loom large on the horizon. Dragon used to frequent the fencing school where the prince was a frequent visitor, and there encountered all comers successfully. The duke got angry, and one day he took up a foil and defied the Neapolitan marquis to a combat. Dragon accepted and was thoroughly beaten, while the duke went off in triumph, for he might say from henceforth that he was the best fencer in St. Petersburg.

When the prince had gone, Dragon could not withstand the temptation of saying that he had only let himself be beaten for fear of offending his antagonist; and this boast soon got to the grand-duke's ears. The great man was terribly enraged, and swore he would have him banished from St. Petersburg if he did not use all his skill, and at the same time he sent an order to Dragon to be at the fencing school the next day.

The impatient duke was the first to arrive, and d'Aragon was not long in coming. The prince began reproaching him for what he had said the day before, but the Neapolitan, far from denying the fact, expressed himself that he had felt himself obliged to shew his respect for his prince by letting him rap him about for upwards of two hours.

"Very good," said the duke, "but now it is your turn; and if you don't do your best I will drive you from St. Petersburg."

"My lord, your highness shall be obeyed. I shall not allow you to touch me once, but I hope you will deign to take me under your protection."

The two champions passed the whole morning with the foils, and the duke was hit a hundred times without being able to touch his antagonist. At last, convinced of Dragon's superiority, he threw down his foil and shook him by the hand, and made him his fencer-in-ordinary, with the rank of major in his regiment of Holsteiners.

Page 6

Shortly after, D'Aragon having won the good graces of the duke obtained leave to hold a bank at faro in his court, and in three or four years he amassed a fortune of a hundred thousand roubles, which he took with him to the Court of King Stanislas, where games of all sorts were allowed. When he passed through Riga, St. Heleine introduced him to Prince Charles, who begged him to call on him the next day, and to shew his skill with the foils against himself and some of his friends. I had the honour to be of the number; and thoroughly well he beat us, for his skill was that of a demon. I was vain enough to become angry at being hit at every pass, and told him that I should not be afraid to meet him at a game of sharps. He was calmer, and replied by taking my hand, and saying,

“With the naked sword I fence in quite another style, and you are quite right not to fear anyone, for you fence very well.”

D'Aragon set out for Warsaw the next day, but he unfortunately found the place occupied by more cunning Greeks than himself. In six months they had relieved him of his hundred thousand roubles, but such is the lot of gamblers; no craft can be more wretched than theirs.

A week before I left Riga (where I stayed two months) Campioni fled by favour of the good Prince Charles, and in a few days the Baron de St. Heleine followed him without taking leave of a noble army of creditors. He only wrote a letter to the Englishman Collins, to whom he owed a thousand crowns, telling him that like an honest man he had left his debts where he had contracted them. We shall hear more of these three persons in the course of two years.

Campioni left me his travelling carriage, which obliged me to use six horses on my journey to St. Petersburg. I was sorry to leave Betty, and I kept up an epistolary correspondence with her mother throughout the whole of my stay at St. Petersburg.

I left Riga with the thermometer indicating fifteen degrees of frost, but though I travelled day and night, not leaving the carriage for the sixty hours for which my journey lasted, I did not feel the cold in the least. I had taken care to pay all the stages in advance, and Marshal Braun, Governor of Livonia, had given me the proper passport. On the box seat was a French servant who had begged me to allow him to wait on me for the journey in return for a seat beside the coachman. He kept his word and served me well, and though he was but ill clad he bore the horrible cold for two days and three nights without appearing to feel it. It is only a Frenchman who can bear such trials; a Russian in similar attire would have been frozen to death in twenty-four hours, despite plentiful doses of corn brandy. I lost sight of this individual when I arrived at St. Petersburg, but I met him again three months after, richly dressed, and occupying a seat beside mine at the table of M. de Czernitscheff. He was the uchtel of the young count, who sat beside him. But I shall have occasion to speak more at length of the office of uchtel, or tutor, in Russia.

Page 7

As for Lambert, who was beside me in the carriage, he did nothing but eat, drink, and sleep the whole way; seldom speaking, for he stammered, and could only talk about mathematical problems, on which I was not always in the humour to converse. He was never amusing, never had any sensible observation to make on the varied scenes through which we passed; in short, he was a fool, and wearisome to all save himself.

I was only stopped once, and that was at Nawa, where the authorities demanded a passport, which I did not possess. I told the governor that as I was a Venetian, and only travelled for pleasure, I did not conceive a passport would be necessary, my Republic not being at war with any other power, and Russia having no embassy at Venice.

“Nevertheless,” I added, “if your excellency wills it I will turn back; but I shall complain to Marshal Braun, who gave me the passport for posting, knowing that I had not the political passport.”

After rubbing his forehead for a minute, the governor gave me a pass, which I still possess, and which brought me into St. Petersburg, without my having to allow the custom-house officers to inspect my trunks.

Between Koporie and St. Petersburg there is only a wretched hut for the accommodation of travellers. The country is a wilderness, and the inhabitants do not even speak Russian. The district is called Ingria, and I believe the jargon spoken has no affinity with any other language. The principal occupation of the peasants is robbery, and the traveller does well not to leave any of his effects alone for a moment.

I got to St. Petersburg just as the first rays of the sun began to gild the horizon. It was in the winter solstice, and the sun rose at the extremity of an immense plain at twenty-four minutes past nine, so I am able to state that the longest night in Russia consists of eighteen hours and three quarters.

I got down in a fine street called the Million. I found a couple of empty rooms, which the people of the house furnished with two beds, four chairs, and two small tables, and rented to me very cheaply. Seeing the enormous stoves, I concluded they must consume a vast amount of wood, but I was mistaken. Russia is the land of stoves as Venice is that of cisterns. I have inspected the interior of these stoves in summer-time as minutely as if I wished to find out the secret of making them; they are twelve feet high by six broad, and are capable of warming a vast room. They are only refuelled once in twenty-four hours, for as soon as the wood is reduced to the state of charcoal a valve is shut in the upper part of the stove.

It is only in the houses of noblemen that the stoves are refuelled twice a day, because servants are strictly forbidden to close the valve, and for a very good reason.



If a gentleman chance to come home and order his servants to warm his room before he goes to bed, and if the servant is careless enough to close the valve before the wood is reduced to charcoal, then the master sleeps his last sleep, being suffocated in three or four hours. When the door is opened in the morning he is found dead, and the poor devil of a servant is immediately hanged, whatever he may say. This sounds severe, and even cruel; but it is a necessary regulation, or else a servant would be able to get rid of his master on the smallest provocation.

Page 8

After I had made an agreement for my board and lodging, both of which were very cheap (now St. Petersburg, is as dear as London), I brought some pieces of furniture which were necessities for me, but which were not as yet much in use in Russia, such as a commode, a bureau, &c.

German is the language principally spoken in St. Petersburg, and I did not speak German much better then than I do now, so I had a good deal of difficulty in making myself understood, and usually excited my auditors to laughter.

After dinner my landlord told me that the Court was giving a masked ball to five thousand persons to last sixty hours. He gave me a ticket, and told me I only needed to shew it at the entrance of the imperial palace.

I decided to use the ticket, for I felt that I should like to be present at so numerous an assembly, and as I had my domino still by me a mask was all I wanted. I went to the palace in a sedan-chair, and found an immense crowd assembled, and dancing going on in several halls in each of which an orchestra was stationed. There were long counters loaded with eatables and drinkables at which those who were hungry or thirsty ate or drank as much as they liked. Gaiety and freedom reigned everywhere, and the light of a thousand wax candles illuminated the hall. Everything was wonderful, and all the more so from its contrast with the cold and darkness that were without. All at once I heard a masquer beside me say to another,—

“There's the czarina.”

We soon saw Gregory Orloff, for his orders were to follow the empress at a distance.

I followed the masquer, and I was soon persuaded that it was really the empress, for everybody was repeating it, though no one openly recognized her. Those who really did not know her jostled her in the crowd, and I imagined that she would be delighted at being treated thus, as it was a proof of the success of her disguise. Several times I saw her speaking in Russian to one masquer and another. No doubt she exposed her vanity to some rude shocks, but she had also the inestimable advantage of hearing truths which her courtiers would certainly not tell her. The masquer who was pronounced to be Orloff followed her everywhere, and did not let her out of his sight for a moment. He could not be mistaken, as he was an exceptionally tall man and had a peculiar carriage of the head.

I arrested my progress in a hall where the French square dance was being performed, and suddenly there appeared a masquer disguised in the Venetian style. The costume was so complete that I at once set him down as a fellow-countryman, for very few strangers can imitate us so as to escape detection. As it happened, he came and stood next to me.

“One would think you were a Venetian,” I said to him in French.

“So I am.”

“Like myself.”

“I am not jesting.”

“No more am I.”

“Then let us speak in Venetian.”

Page 9

"Do you begin, and I will reply."

We began our conversation, but when he came to the word Sabato, Saturday, which is a Sabo in Venetian, I discovered that he was a real Venetian, but not from Venice itself. He said I was right, and that he judged from my accent that I came from Venice.

"Quite so," said I.

"I thought Bernadi was the only Venetian besides myself in St. Petersburg."

"You see you are mistaken."

"My name is Count Volpati di Treviso."

"Give me your address, and I will come and tell you who I am, for I cannot do so here."

"Here it is."

After leaving the count I continued my progress through this wonderful hall, and two or three hours after I was attracted by the voice of a female masquer speaking Parisian French in a high falsetto, such as is common at an opera ball.

I did not recognize the voice but I knew the style, and felt quite certain that the masquer must be one of my old friends, for she spoke with the intonations and phraseology which I had rendered popular in my chief places of resort at Paris.

I was curious to see who it could be, and not wishing to speak before I knew her, I had the patience to wait till she lifted her mask, and this occurred at the end of an hour. What was my surprise to see Madame Baret, the stocking-seller of the Rue St. Honor& My love awoke from its long sleep, and coming up to her I said, in a falsetto voice,—

"I am your friend of the 'Hotel d'Elbeuf.'"

She was puzzled, and looked the picture of bewilderment. I whispered in her ear, "Gilbert Baret, Rue des Prouveres," and certain other facts which could only be known to herself and a fortunate lover.

She saw I knew her inmost secrets, and drawing me away she begged me to tell her who I was.

"I was your lover, and a fortunate one, too," I replied; "but before I tell you my name, with whom are you, and how are you?"

"Very well; but pray do not divulge what I tell you. I left Paris with M. d'Anglade, counsellor in the Court of Rouen. I lived happily enough for some time with him, and



then left him to go with a theatrical manager, who brought me here as an actress under the name of de l'Anglade, and now I am kept by Count Rzewuski, the Polish ambassador. And now tell me who you are?"

Feeling sure of enjoying her again, I lifted my mask. She gave a cry of joy, and exclaimed,—

"My good angel has brought you to St. Petersburg."

"How do you mean?"

"Rzewuski is obliged to go back to Poland, and now I count on you to get me out of the country, for I can no longer continue in a station for which I was not intended, since I can neither sing nor act."

She gave me her address, and I left her delighted with my discovery. After having passed half an hour at the counter, eating and drinking of the best, I returned to the crowd and saw my fair stocking-seller talking to Count Volpati. He had seen her with me, and hastened to enquire my name of her. However, she was faithful to our mutual promise, and told him I was her husband, though the Venetian did not seem to give the least credence to this piece of information.

Page 10

At last I was tired and left the ball, and went to bed intending to go to mass in the morning. I slept for some time and woke, but as it was still dark I turned on the other side and went to sleep again. At last I awoke again, and seeing the daylight stealing through my double windows, I sent for a hairdresser, telling my man to make haste as I wanted to hear mass on the first Sunday after my arrival in St. Petersburg.

“But sir,” said he, “the first Sunday was yesterday; we are at Monday now.”

“What! Monday?”

“Yes, sir.”

I had spent twenty-seven hours in bed, and after laughing at the mishap I felt as if I could easily believe it, for my hunger was like that of a cannibal.

This is the only day which I really lost in my life; but I do not weep like the Roman emperor, I laugh. But this is not the only difference between Titus and Casanova.

I called on Demetrio Papanelopulo, the Greek merchant, who was to pay me a hundred roubles a month. I was also commended to him by M. da Loglio, and I had an excellent reception. He begged me to come and dine with him every day, paid me the roubles for the month due, and assured me that he had honoured my bill drawn at Mitau. He also found me a reliable servant, and a carriage at eighteen roubles, or six ducats per month. Such cheapness has, alas! departed for ever.

The next day, as I was dining with the worthy Greek and young Bernardi, who was afterwards poisoned, Count Volpati came in with the dessert, and told us how he had met a Venetian at the ball who had promised to come and see him.

“The Venetian would have kept his promise,” said I, “if he had not had a long sleep of twenty-seven hours. I am the Venetian, and am delighted to continue our acquaintance.”

The count was about to leave, and his departure had already been announced in the St. Petersburg Gazette. The Russian custom is not to give a traveller his passports till a fortnight has elapsed after the appearance of his name in the paper. This regulation is for the advantage of tradesmen, while it makes foreigners think twice before they contract any debts.

The next day I took a letter of introduction to M. Pietro Ivanovitch Melissino, colonel and afterwards general of artillery. The letter was written by Madame da Loglio, who was very intimate with Melissino. I was most politely welcomed, and after presenting me to his pleasant wife, he asked me once for all to sup with him every night. The house was managed in the French style, and both play and supper were conducted without any ceremony. I met there Melissino's elder brother, the procurator of the Holy Synod and

husband of the Princess Dolgorouki. Faro went on, and the company was composed of trustworthy persons who neither boasted of their gains nor bewailed their losses to anyone, and so there was no fear of the Government discovering this infringement of the law against gaming. The bank was held by Baron Lefort, son of the celebrated admiral of Peter the Great. Lefort was an example of the inconstancy of fortune; he was then in disgrace on account of a lottery which he had held at Moscow to celebrate the coronation of the empress, who had furnished him with the necessary funds. The lottery had been broken and the fact was attributed to the baron's supposed dishonesty.

Page 11

I played for small stakes and won a few roubles. I made friends with Baron Lefort at supper, and he afterwards told me of the vicissitudes he had experienced.

As I was praising the noble calmness with which a certain prince had lost a thousand roubles to him, he laughed and said that the fine gamester I had mentioned played upon credit but never paid.

“How about his honour?”

“It is not affected by the non-payment of gaming debts. It is an understood thing in Russia that one who plays on credit and loses may pay or not pay as he wishes, and the winner only makes himself ridiculous by reminding the loser of his debt.”

“Then the holder of the bank has the right to refuse to accept bets which are not backed by ready money.”

“Certainly; and nobody has a right to be offended with him for doing so. Gaming is in a very bad state in Russia. I know young men of the highest rank whose chief boast is that they know how to conquer fortune; that is, to cheat. One of the Matuschkins goes so far as to challenge all foreign cheats to master him. He has just received permission to travel for three years, and it is an open secret that he wishes to travel that he may exercise his skill. He intends returning to Russia laden with the spoils of the dupes he has made.”

A young officer of the guards named Zinowieff, a relation of the Orloffs, whom I had met at Melissino's, introduced me to Macartney, the English ambassador, a young man of parts and fond of pleasure. He had fallen in love with a young lady of the Chitroff family, and maid of honour to the empress, and finding his affection reciprocated a baby was the result. The empress disapproved strongly of this piece of English freedom, and had the ambassador recalled, though she forgave her maid of honour. This forgiveness was attributed to the young lady's skill in dancing. I knew the brother of this lady, a fine and intelligent young officer. I had the good fortune to be admitted to the Court, and there I had the pleasure of seeing Mdle. Chitroff dancing, and also Mdle. Sievers, now Princesss, whom I saw again at Dresden four years ago with her daughter, an extremely genteel young princess. I was enchanted with Mdle. Sievers, and felt quite in love with her; but as we were never introduced I had no opportunity of declaring my passion. Putini, the castrato, was high in her favour, as indeed he deserved to be, both for his talents and the beauties of his person.

The worthy Papanelopulo introduced me to Alsuwieff, one of the ministers, a man of wit and letters, and only one of the kind whom I met in Russia. He had been an industrious student at the University of Upsala, and loved wine, women, and good cheer. He asked me to dine with Locatelli at Catherinhoff, one of the imperial mansions, which the empress had assigned to the old theatrical manager for the remainder of his days. He



was astonished to see me, and I was more astonished still to find that he had turned taverner, for he gave an excellent dinner every day to all who cared to pay a rouble, exclusive of wine. M. d'Alsuwieff introduced me to his colleague in the ministry, Teploff, whose vice was that he loved boys, and his virtue that he had strangled Peter III.

Page 12

Madame Mecour, the dancer, introduced me to her lover, Ghelaghin, also a minister. He had spent twenty years of his life in Siberia.

A letter from Da Loglio got me a warm welcome from the castrato Luini, a delightful man, who kept a splendid table. He was the lover of Colonna, the singer, but their affection seemed to me a torment, for they could scarce live together in peace for a single day. At Luini's house I met another castrato, Millico, a great friend of the chief huntsman, Narischkin, who also became one of my friends. This Narischkin, a pleasant and a well-informed man, was the husband of the famous Maria Paulovna. It was at the chief huntsman's splendid table that I met Calogeso Plato, now archbishop of Novgorod, and then chaplain to the empress. This monk was a Russian, and a master of ruses, understood Greek, and spoke Latin and French, and was what would be called a fine man. It was no wonder that he rose to such a height, as in Russia the nobility never lower themselves by accepting church dignities.

Da Loglio had given me a letter for the Princess Daschkoff, and I took it to her country house, at the distance of three versts from St. Petersburg. She had been exiled from the capital, because, having assisted Catherine to ascend the throne, she claimed to share it with her.

I found the princess mourning for the loss of her husband. She welcomed me kindly, and promised to speak to M. Panin on my behalf; and three days later she wrote to me that I could call on that nobleman as soon as I liked. This was a specimen of the empress's magnanimity; she had disgraced the princess, but she allowed her favourite minister to pay his court to her every evening. I have heard, on good authority, that Panin was not the princess's lover, but her father. She is now the President of the Academy of Science, and I suppose the literati must look upon her as another Minerva, or else they would be ashamed to have a woman at their head. For completeness' sake the Russians should get a woman to command their armies, but Joan d'Arcs are scarce.

Melissino and I were present at an extraordinary ceremony on the Day of the Epiphany, namely the blessing of the Neva, then covered with five feet of ice.

After the benediction of the waters children were baptized by being plunged into a large hole which had been made in the ice. On the day on which I was present the priest happened to let one of the children slip through his hands.

"Drugoi!" he cried.

That is, "Give me another." But my surprise may be imagined when I saw that the father and mother of the child were in an ecstasy of joy; they were certain that the babe had been carried straight to heaven. Happy ignorance!

Page 13

I had a letter from the Florentine Madame Bregonci for her friend the Venetian Roccolini, who had left Venice to go and sing at the St. Petersburg Theatre, though she did not know a note of music, and had never appeared on the stage. The empress laughed at her, and said she feared there was no opening in St. Petersburg for her peculiar talents, but the Roccolini, who was known as La Vicenza, was not the woman to lose heart for so small a check. She became an intimate friend of a Frenchwoman named Prote, the wife of a merchant who lived with the chief huntsman. She was at the same time his mistress and the confidante of his wife Maria Petrovna, who did not like her husband, and was very much obliged to the Frenchwoman for delivering her from the conjugal importunities.

This Prote was one of the handsomest women I have ever seen, and undoubtedly the handsomest in St. Petersburg at that time. She was in the flower of her age. She had at once a wonderful taste for gallantry and for all the mysteries of the toilette. In dress she surpassed everyone, and as she was witty and amusing she captivated all hearts. Such was the woman whose friend and procuress La Vicenza had become. She received the applications of those who were in love with Madame Prote, and passed them on, while, whether a lover's suit was accepted or not, the procuress got something out of him.

I recognized Signora Roccolini as soon as I saw her, but as twenty years had elapsed since our last meeting she did not wonder at my appearing not to know her, and made no efforts to refresh my memory. Her brother was called Montellato, and he it was who tried to assassinate me one night in St. Mark's Square, as I was leaving the Ridotto. The plot that would have cost me my life, if I had not made my escape from the window, was laid in the Roccolini's house.

She welcomed me as a fellow-countryman in a strange land, told me of her struggles, and added that now she had an easy life of it, and associated with the pleasantest ladies in St. Petersburg.

"I am astonished that you have not met the fair Madame Prote at the chief huntsman's, for she is the darling of his heart. Come and take coffee with me to-morrow, and you shall see a wonder."

I kept the appointment, and I found the lady even more beautiful than the Venetian's praises of her had led me to expect. I was dazzled by her beauty, but not being a rich man I felt that I must set my wits to work if I wanted to enjoy her. I asked her name, though I knew it quite well, and she replied, "Prote."

"I am glad to hear it, madam," said I, "for you thereby promise to be mine."

"How so?" said she, with a charming smile. I explained the pun, and made her laugh. I told her amusing stories, and let her know the effect that her beauty had produced on

me, and that I hoped time would soften her heart to me. The acquaintance was made, and thenceforth I never went to Narischkin's without calling on her, either before or after dinner.

Page 14

The Polish ambassador returned about that time, and I had to forego my enjoyment of the fair Anglade, who accepted a very advantageous proposal which was made her by Count Brawn. This charming Frenchwoman died of the small-pox a few months later, and there can be no doubt that her death was a blessing, as she would have fallen into misery and poverty after her beauty had once decayed.

I desired to succeed with Madame Prote, and with that idea I asked her to dinner at Locatelli's with Luini, Colonna, Zinowieff, Signora Vicenza, and a violinist, her lover. We had an excellent dinner washed down with plenty of wine, and the spirits of the company were wound up to the pitch I desired. After the repast each gentleman went apart with his lady, and I was on the point of success when an untoward accident interrupted us. We were summoned to see the proofs of Luini's prowess; he had gone out shooting with his dogs and guns.

As I was walking away from Catherinhoff with Zinowieff I noticed a young country-woman whose beauty astonished me. I pointed her out to the young officer, and we made for her; but she fled away with great activity to a little cottage, where we followed her. We went in and saw the father, mother, and some children, and in a corner the timid form of the fair maiden.

Zinowieff (who, by the way, was for twenty years Russian ambassador at Madrid) had a long conversation in Russian with the father. I did not understand what was said, but I guessed it referred to the girl because, when her father called her, she advanced submissively, and stood modestly before us.

The conversation over, Zinowieff went out, and I followed him after giving the master of the house a rouble. Zinowieff told me what had passed, saying that he had asked the father if he would let him have the daughter as a maid-servant, and the father had replied that it should be so with all his heart, but that he must have a hundred roubles for her, as she was still a virgin. "So you see," added Zinowieff, "the matter is quite simple."

"How simple?"

"Why, yes; only a hundred roubles."

"And supposing me to be inclined to give that sum?"

"Then she would be your servant, and you could do anything you liked with her, except kill her."

"And supposing she is not willing?"

"That never happens, but if it did you could have beaten her."

“Well, if she is satisfied and I enjoy her, can I still continue to keep her?”

“You will be her master, I tell you, and can have her arrested if she attempts to escape, unless she can return the hundred roubles you gave for her.”

“What must I give her per month?”

“Nothing, except enough to eat and drink. You must also let her go to the baths on Saturday and to the church on Sunday.”

“Can I make her come with me when I leave St. Petersburg?”

“No, unless you obtain permission and find a surety, for though the girl would be your slave she would still be a slave to the empress.”

Page 15

“Very good; then will you arrange this matter for me? I will give the hundred roubles, and I promise you I will not treat her as a slave. But I hope you will care for my interests, as I do not wish to be duped.”

“I promise you you shall not be duped; I will see to everything. Would you like her now?”

“No, to-morrow.”

“Very good; then to-morrow it shall be.”

We returned to St. Petersburg in a phaeton, and the next day at nine o'clock I called on Zinowieff, who said he was delighted to do me this small service. On the way he said that if I liked he could get me a perfect seraglio of pretty girls in a few days.

“No,” said I, “one is enough.” And I gave him the hundred roubles.

We arrived at the cottage, where we found the father, mother, and daughter. Zinowieff explained his business crudely enough, after the custom of the country, and the father thanked St. Nicholas for the good luck he had sent him. He spoke to his daughter, who looked at me and softly uttered the necessary yes.

Zinowieff then told me that I ought to ascertain that matters were intact, as I was going to pay for a virgin. I was afraid of offending her, and would have nothing to do with it; but Zinowieff said the girl would be mortified if I did not examine her, and that she would be delighted if I place her in a position to prove before her father and mother that her conduct had always been virtuous. I therefore made the examination as modestly as I could, and I found her to be intact. To tell the truth, I should not have said anything if things had been otherwise.

Zinowieff then gave the hundred roubles to the father, who handed them to his daughter, and she only took them to return them to her mother. My servant and coachman were then called in to witness as arrangement of which they knew nothing.

I called her Zaira, and she got into the carriage and returned with me to St. Petersburg in her coarse clothes, without a chemise of any kind. After I had dropped Zinowieff at his lodging I went home, and for four days I was engaged in collecting and arranging my slave's toilet, not resting till I had dressed her modestly in the French style. In less than three months she had learnt enough Italian to tell me what she wanted and to understand me. She soon loved me, and afterwards she got jealous. But we shall hear more of her in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XX

Crevecoeur—Bombay—Journey to Moscow—My Adventures At St. Petersburg

The day on which I took Zaira I sent Lambert away, for I did not know what to do with him. He got drunk every day, and when in his cups he was unbearable. Nobody would have anything to say to him except as a common soldier, and that is not an enviable position in Russia. I got him a passport for Berlin, and gave him enough money for the journey. I heard afterwards that he entered the Austrian service.

Page 16

In May, Zaira had become so beautiful that when I went to Moscow I dared not leave her behind me, so I took her in place of a servant. It was delicious to me to hear her chattering in the Venetian dialect I had taught her. On a Saturday I would go with her to the bath where thirty or forty naked men and women were bathing together without the slightest constraint. This absence of shame must arise, I should imagine, from native innocence; but I wondered that none looked at Zaira, who seemed to me the original of the statue of Psyche I had seen at the Villa Borghese at Rome. She was only fourteen, so her breast was not yet developed, and she bore about her few traces of puberty. Her skin was as white as snow, and her ebony tresses covered the whole of her body, save in a few places where the dazzling whiteness of her skin shone through. Her eyebrows were perfectly shaped, and her eyes, though they might have been larger, could not have been more brilliant or more expressive. If it had not been for her furious jealousy and her blind confidence in fortune-telling by cards, which she consulted every day, Zaira would have been a paragon among women, and I should never have left her.

A young and distinguished-looking Frenchman came to St. Petersburg with a young Parisian named La Riviere, who was tolerably pretty but quite devoid of education, unless it were that education common to all the girls who sell their charms in Paris. This young man came to me with a letter from Prince Charles of Courland, who said that if I could do anything for the young couple he would be grateful to me. They arrived just as I was breakfasting with Zaira.

"You must tell me," said I to the young Frenchman, "in what way I can be of use to you."

"By admitting us to your company, and introducing us to your friends."

"Well, I am a stranger here, and I will come and see you, and you can come and see me, and I shall be delighted; but I never dine at home. As to my friends, you must feel that, being a stranger, I could not introduce you and the lady. Is she your wife? People will ask me who you are, and what you are doing at St. Petersburg. What am I to say? I wonder Prince Charles did not send you to someone else."

"I am a gentleman of Lorraine, and Madame la Riviere is my mistress, and my object in coming to St. Petersburg is to amuse myself."

"Then I don't know to whom I could introduce you under the circumstances; but I should think you will be able to find plenty of amusement without knowing anyone. The theatres, the streets, and even the Court entertainments, are open to everyone. I suppose you have plenty of money?"

"That's exactly what I haven't got, and I don't expect any either."

"Well, I have not much more, but you really astonish me. How could you have been so foolish as to come here without money?"

“Well, my mistress said we could do with what money we got from day to day. She induced me to leave Paris without a farthing, and up to now it seems to me that she is right. We have managed to get on somehow.”

Page 17

"Then she has the purse?"

"My purse," said she, "is in the pockets of my friends."

"I understand, and I am sure you have no difficulty in finding the wherewithal to live. If I had such a purse, it should be opened for you, but I am not a rich man."

Bomback, a citizen of Hamburg, whom I had known in England whence he had fled on account of his debts, had come to St. Petersburg and entered the army. He was the son of a rich merchant and kept up a house, a carriage, and an army of servants; he was a lover of good cheer, women, and gambling, and contracted debts everywhere. He was an ugly man, but full of wit and energy. He happened to call on me just as I was addressing the strange traveller whose purse was in the pocket of her friends. I introduced the couple to him, telling the whole story, the item of the purse excepted. The adventure was just to Bomback's taste, and he began making advances to Madame la Riviere, who received them in a thoroughly professional spirit, and I was inwardly amused and felt that her axiom was a true one. Bomback asked them to dine with him the next day, and begged them to come and take an unceremonious dinner the same day with him at Crasnacaback. I was included in the invitation, and Zaira, not understanding French, asked me what we were talking about, and on my telling her expressed a desire to accompany me. I gave in to appease her, for I knew the wish proceeded from jealousy, and that if I did not consent I should be tormented by tears, ill-humour, reproaches, melancholy, *etc.* This had occurred several times before, and so violent had she been that I had been compelled to conform to the custom of the country and beat her. Strange to say, I could not have taken a better way to prove my love. Such is the character of the Russian women. After the blows had been given, by slow degrees she became affectionate again, and a love encounter sealed the reconciliation.

Bomback left us to make his preparations in high spirits, and while Zaira was dressing, Madame Riviere talked in such a manner as to make me almost think that I was absolutely deficient in knowledge of the world. The astonishing thing was that her lover did not seem in the least ashamed of the part he had to play. He might say that he was in love with the Messalina, but the excuse would not have been admissible.

The party was a merry one. Bomback talked to the adventuress, Zaira sat on my knee, and Crevecoeur ate and drank, laughed in season and out of season, and walked up and down. The crafty Madame Riviere incited Bomback to risk twenty-five roubles at quinze; he lost and paid pleasantly, and only got a kiss for his money. Zaira, who was delighted to be able to watch over me and my fidelity, jested pleasantly on the Frenchwoman and the complaisance of her lover. This was altogether beyond her comprehension, and she could not understand how he could bear such deeds as were done before his face.

Page 18

The next day I went to Bomback by myself, as I was sure of meeting young Russian officers, who would have annoyed me by making love to Zaira in their own language. I found the two travellers and the brothers Lunin, then lieutenants but now generals. The younger of them was as fair and pretty as any girl. He had been the beloved of the minister Teploff, and, like a lad of wit, he not only was not ashamed but openly boasted that it was his custom to secure the good-will of all men by his caresses.

He had imagined the rich citizen of Hamburg to be of the same tastes as Teploff, and he had not been mistaken; and so he degraded me by forming the same supposition. With this idea he seated himself next to me at table, and behaved himself in such a manner during dinner that I began to believe him to be a girl in man's clothes.

After dinner, as I was sitting at the fire, between him and the Frenchman, I imparted my suspicions to him; but jealous of the superiority of his sex, he displayed proof of it on the spot, and forthwith got hold of me and put himself in a position to make my happiness and his own as he called it. I confess, to my shame, that he might perhaps have succeeded, if Madame la Riviere, indignant at this encroachment of her peculiar province, had not made him desist.

Lunin the elder, Crevecœur, and Bomback, who had been for a walk, returned at nightfall with two or three friends, and easily consoled the Frenchman for the poor entertainment the younger Lunin and myself had given him.

Bomback held a bank at faro, which only came to an end at eleven, when the money was all gone. We then supped, and the real orgy began, in which la Riviere bore the brunt in a manner that was simply astonishing. I and my friend Lunin were merely spectators, and poor Crevecœur had gone to bed. We did not separate till day-break.

I got home, and, fortunately for myself, escaped the bottle which Zaira flung at my head, and which would infallibly have killed me if it had hit me. She threw herself on to the ground, and began to strike it with her forehead. I thought she had gone mad, and wondered whether I had better call for assistance; but she became quiet enough to call me assassin and traitor, with all the other abusive epithets that she could remember. To convict me of my crime she shewed me twenty-five cards, placed in order, and on them she displayed the various enormities of which I had been guilty.

I let her go on till her rage was somewhat exhausted, and then, having thrown her divining apparatus into the fire, I looked at her in pity and anger, and said that we must part the next day, as she had narrowly escaped killing me. I confessed that I had been with Bomback, and that there had been a girl in the house; but I denied all the other sins of which she accused me. I then went to sleep without taking the slightest notice of her, in spite of all she said and did to prove her repentance.

Page 19

I woke after a few hours to find her sleeping soundly, and I began to consider how I could best rid myself of the girl, who would probably kill me if we continued living together. Whilst I was absorbed in these thoughts she awoke, and falling at my feet wept and professed her utter repentance, and promised never to touch another card as long as I kept her.

At last I could resist her entreaties no longer, so I took her in my arms and forgave her; and we did not part till she had received undeniable proofs of the return of my affection. I intended to start for Moscow in three days, and she was delighted when she heard she was to go.

Three circumstances had won me this young girl's furious affection. In the first place I often took her to see her family, with whom I always left a rouble; in the second I made her eat with me; and in the third I had beaten her three or four times when she had tried to prevent me going out.

In Russia beating is a matter of necessity, for words have no force whatever. A servant, mistress, or courtesan understands nothing but the lash. Words are altogether thrown away, but a few good strokes are entirely efficacious. The servant, whose soul is still more enslaved than his body, reasons somewhat as follows, after he has had a beating:

"My master has not sent me away, but beaten me; therefore he loves me, and I ought to be attached to him."

It is the same with the Russian soldier, and in fact with everybody. Honour stands for nothing, but with the knout and brandy one can get anything from them except heroical enthusiasm.

Papanelopulo laughed at me when I said that as I liked my Cossack I should endeavour to correct him with words only when he took too much brandy.

"If you do not beat him," he said, "he will end by beating you;" and he spoke the truth.

One day, when he was so drunk as to be unable to attend on me, I began to scold him, and threatened him with the stick if he did not mend his ways. As soon as he saw my cane lifted, he ran at me and got hold of it; and if I had not knocked him down immediately, he would doubtless have beaten me. I dismissed him on the spot. There is not a better servant in the world than a Russian. He works without ceasing, sleeps in front of the door of his master's bedroom to be always ready to fulfil his orders, never answering his reproaches, incapable of theft. But after drinking a little too much brandy he becomes a perfect monster; and drunkenness is the vice of the whole nation.

A coachman knows no other way of resisting the bitter cold to which he is exposed, than by drinking rye brandy. It sometimes happens that he drinks till he falls asleep, and then there is no awaking for him in this world. Unless one is very careful, it is easy to lose an ear, the nose, a cheek, or a lip by frost bites. One day as I was walking out on a bitterly cold day, a Russian noticed that one of

Page 20

my ears was frozen. He ran up to me and rubbed the affected part with a handful of snow till the circulation was restored. I asked him how he had noticed my state, and he said he had remarked the livid whiteness of my ear, and this, he said, was always a sign that the frost had taken it. What surprised me most of all is that sometimes the part grows again after it has dropped off. Prince Charles of Courland assured me that he had cost his nose in Siberia, and that it had grown again the next summer. I have been assured of the truth of this by several Russians.

About this time the empress made the architect Rinaldi, who had been fifty years in St. Petersburg, build her an enormous wooden amphitheatre so large as to cover the whole of the space in front of the palace. It would contain a hundred thousand spectators, and in it Catherine intended to give a vast tournament to all the knights of her empire. There were to be four parties of a hundred knights each, and all the cavaliers were to be clad in the national costume of the nations they represented. All the Russians were informed of this great festival, which was to be given at the expense of the sovereign, and the princes, counts, and barons were already arriving with their chargers from the most remote parts of the empire. Prince Charles of Courland wrote informing me of his intention to be present.

It had been ordained, that the tournament should take place on the first fine day, and this precaution was a very wise one; for, excepting in the season of the hard frosts, a day without rain, or snow, or wind, is a marvel. In Italy, Spain, and France, one can reckon on fine weather, and bad weather is the exception, but it is quite the contrary in Russia. Ever since I have known this home of frost and the cold north wind, I laugh when I hear travelling Russians talking of the fine climate of their native country. However, it is a pardonable weakness, most of us prefer “mine” to “thine;” nobles affect to consider themselves of purer blood than the peasants from whom they sprang, and the Romans and other ancient nations pretended that they were the children of the gods, to draw a veil over their actual ancestors who were doubtless robbers. The truth is, that during the whole year 1756 there was not one fine day in Russia, or in Ingria at all events, and the mere proofs of this statement may be found in the fact that the tournament was not held in that year. It was postponed till the next, and the princes, counts, barons, and knights spent the winter in the capital, unless their purses forbade them to indulge in the luxuries of Court life. The dear Prince of Courland was in this case, to my great disappointment.

Having made all arrangements for my journey to Moscow, I got into my sleeping carriage with Zaira, having a servant behind who could speak both Russian and German. For twenty-four roubles the chevochic (hirer out of horses) engaged to carry me to Moscow in six days and seven nights with six horses. This struck me as being extremely cheap. The distance is seventy-two Russian stages, almost equivalent to five hundred Italian miles, or a hundred and sixty French leagues.

Page 21

We set out just as a cannon shot from the citadel announced the close of day. It was towards the end of May, in which month there is literally no night at St. Petersburg. Without the report of the cannon no one would be able to tell when the day ended and the night began. One can read a letter at midnight, and the moonlight makes no appreciable difference. This continual day lasts for eight weeks, and during that time no one lights a candle. At Moscow it is different; a candle is always necessary at midnight if one wished to read.

We reached Novgorod in forty-eight hours, and here the chevochic allowed us a rest of five hours. I saw a circumstance there which surprised me very much, though one has no business to be surprised at anything if one travels much, and especially in a land of half savages. I asked the chevochic to drink, but he appeared to be in great melancholy. I enquired what was the matter, and he told Zaira that one of his horses had refused to eat, and that it was clear that if he could not eat he could not work. We followed him into the stable, and found the horse looking oppressed by care, its head lowered and motionless; it had evidently got no appetite. His master began a pathetic oration, looking tenderly at the animal, as if to arouse it to a sense of duty, and then taking its head, and kissing it lovingly, he put it into the manger, but to no purpose. Then the man began to weep bitterly, but in such a way that I had the greatest difficulty to prevent myself laughing, for I could see that he wept in the hope that his tears might soften the brute's heart. When he had wept some time he again put the horse's head into the manger, but again to no purpose. At this he got furious and swore to be avenged. He led the horse out of the stable, tied it to a post, and beat it with a thick stick for a quarter of an hour so violently that my heart bled for the poor animal. At last the chevochic was tired out, and taking the horse back to the stable he fastened up his head once more, and to my astonishment it began to devour its provender with the greatest appetite. At this the master jumped for joy, laughed, sang, and committed a thousand extravagancies, as if to shew the horse how happy it had made him. I was beside myself with astonishment, and concluded that such treatment would have succeeded nowhere but in Russia, where the stick seems to be the panacea or universal medicine.

They tell me, however, that the stick is gradually going out of fashion. Peter the Great used to beat his generals black and blue, and in his days a lieutenant had to receive with all submission the cuffs of his captain, who bent before the blows of his major, who did the same to his colonel, who received chastisement from his general. So I was informed by old General Woyakoff, who was a pupil of Peter the Great, and had often been beaten by the great emperor, the founder of St. Petersburg.

Page 22

It seems to me that I have scarcely said anything about this great and famous capital, which in my opinion is built on somewhat precarious foundations. No one but Peter could have thus given the lie to Nature by building his immense palaces of marble and granite on mud and shifting sand. They tell me that the town is now in its manhood, to the honour of the great Catherine; but in the year 1765 it was still in its minority, and seemed to me only to have been built with the childish aim of seeing it fall into ruins. Streets were built with the certainty of having to repair them in six months' time. The whole place proclaimed itself to be the whim of a despot. If it is to be durable constant care will be required, for nature never gives up its rights and reasserts them when the constraint of man is withdrawn. My theory is that sooner or later the soil must give way and drag the vast city with it.

We reached Moscow in the time the chevokich had promised. As the same horses were used for the whole journey, it would have been impossible to travel more quickly. A Russian told me that the Empress Elizabeth had done the journey in fifty-two hours.

"You mean that she issued a ukase to the effect that she had done it," said a Russian of the old school; "and if she had liked she could have travelled more quickly still; it was only a question of the wording of the ukase."

Even when I was in Russia it was not allowable to doubt the infallibility of a ukase, and to do so was, equivalent to high treason. One day I was crossing a canal at St. Petersburg by a small wooden bridge; Melissino Papanelopulo, and some other Russians were with me. I began to abuse the wooden bridge, which I characterized as both mean and dangerous. One of my companions said that on such a day it would be replaced by a fine stone bridge, as the empress had to pass there on some state occasion. The day named was three weeks off, and I said plainly that it was impossible. One of the Russians looked askance at me, and said there was no doubt about it, as a ukase had been published ordering that the bridge should be built. I was going to answer him, but Papanelopulo gave my hand a squeeze, and whispered "Taci!" (hush).

The bridge was not built, but I was not justified, for the empress published another ukase in which she declared it to be her gracious pleasure that the bridge should not be built till the following year. If anyone would see what a pure despotism is like, let him go to Russia.

The Russian sovereigns use the language of despotism on all occasions. One day I saw the empress, dressed in man's clothes, going out for a ride. Her master of the horse, Prince Repnin, held the bridle of the horse, which suddenly gave him a kick which broke his anklebone. The empress instantly ordained that the horse should be taken away, and that no one should mount it again under pain of death. All official positions in Russia have military rank assigned

Page 23

to them, and this sufficiently indicates the nature of the Government. The coachman-in-chief of her imperial highness holds the rank of colonel, as also does her chief cook. The castrato Luini was a lieutenant-colonel, and the painter Toretti only a captain, because he had only eight hundred roubles a year, while the coachman had three thousand. The sentinels at the doors of the palace have their muskets crossed, and ask those who wish to pass through what is their rank. When I was asked this question, I stopped short; but the quick-witted officer asked me how much I had a year, and on my replying, at a hazard, three thousand roubles, he gave me the rank of general, and I was allowed to pass. I saw the czarina for a moment; she stopped at the door and took off her gloves to give her hands to be kissed by the officer and the two sentinels. By such means as this she had won the affection of the corps, commanded by Gregorius Gregorovitch Orloff, on which her safety depended in case of revolution.

I made the following notes when I saw the empress hearing mass in her chapel. The protopapa, or bishop, received her at the door to give her the holy water, and she kissed his episcopal ring, while the prelate, whose beard was a couple of feet in length, lowered his head to kiss the hands of his temporal sovereign and spiritual head, for in Russia the he or she on the throne is the spiritual as well as temporal head of the Church.

She did not evidence the least devotion during mass; hypocrisy did not seem to be one of her vices. Now she smiled at one of her suite, now at another, and occasionally she addressed the favourite, not because she had anything to say to him, but to make him an object of envy to the others.

One evening, as she was leaving the theatre where Metastasio's Olympiade had been performed, I heard her say,—

“The music of that opera has given the greatest pleasure to everyone, so of course I am delighted with it; but it wearies me, nevertheless. Music is a fine thing, but I cannot understand how anyone who is seriously occupied can love it passionately. I will have Buranello here, and I wonder whether he will interest me in music, but I am afraid nature did not constitute me to feel all its charms.”

She always argued in that way. In due time I will set down her words to me when I returned from Moscow. When I arrived at that city I got down at a good inn, where they gave me two rooms and a coach-house for my carriage. After dinner I hired a small carriage and a guide who could speak French. My carriage was drawn by four horses, for Moscow is a vast city composed of four distinct towns, and many of the streets are rough and ill-paved. I had five or six letters of introduction, and I determined to take them all. I took Zaira with me, as she was as curious to see everything as a girl of

fourteen naturally is. I do not remember what feast the Greek Church was keeping on that day, but I shall never

Page 24

forget the terrific bell-ringing with which my ears were assailed, for there are churches every where. The country people were engaged in sowing their grain, to reap it in September. They laughed at our Southern custom of sowing eight months earlier, as unnecessary and even prejudicial to the crops, but I do not know where the right lies. Perhaps we may both be right, for there is no master to compare with experience. I took all the introductions I had received from Narischkin, Prince Repnin, the worthy Pananelopulo, and Melissino's brother. The next morning the whole of the persons at whose houses I had left letters called on me. They all asked Zaira and myself to dinner, and I accepted the invitation of the first comer, M. Dinidoff, and promised to dine with the rest on the following days, Zaira, who had been tutored by me to some extent, was delighted to shew me that she was worthy of the position she occupied. She was exquisitely dressed, and won golden opinions everywhere, for our hosts did not care to enquire whether she were my daughter, my mistress, or my servant, for in this matter, as in many others, the Russians are excessively indulgent. Those who have not seen Moscow have not seen Russia, for the people of St. Petersburg are not really Russians at all. Their court manners are very different from their manners 'au naturel', and it may be said with truth that the true Russian is as a stranger in St. Petersburg. The citizens of, Moscow, and especially the rich ones, speak with pity of those, who for one reason or another, had expatriated themselves; and with them to expatriate one's self is to leave Moscow, which they consider as their native land. They look on St. Petersburg with an envious eye, and call it the ruin of Russia. I do not know whether this is a just view to take of the case, I merely repeat what I have heard.

In the course of a week I saw all the sights of Moscow—the manufacturers, the churches, the remains of the old days, the museums, the libraries, (of no interest to my mind), not forgetting the famous bell. I noticed that their bells are not allowed to swing like ours, but are motionless, being rung by a rope attached to the clapper.

I thought the Moscow women more handsome than those of St. Petersburg, and I attribute this to the great superiority of the air. They are gentle and accessible by nature; and to obtain the favour of a kiss on the lips, one need only make a show of kissing their hands.

There was good fare in plenty, but no delicacy in its composition or arrangement. Their table is always open to friends and acquaintances, and a friend may bring to five or six persons to dinner, and even at the end of the meals you will never hear a Russian say, "We have had dinner; you have come too late." Their souls are not black enough for them to pronounce such words as this. Notice is given to the cook, and the dinner begins over again. They have a delicious drink, the name of which I do

Page 25

not remember; but it is much superior to the sherbet of Constantinople. The numerous servants are not given water, but a light, nourishing, and agreeable fluid, which may be purchased very cheaply. They all hold St. Nicholas in the greatest reverence, only praying to God through the mediation of this saint, whose picture is always suspended in the principal room of the house. A person coming in makes first a bow to the image and then a bow to the master, and if perchance the image is absent, the Russian, after gazing all round, stands confused and motionless, not knowing what to do. As a general rule the Muscovites are the most superstitious Christians in the world. Their liturgy is in Greek, of which the people understand nothing, and the clergy, themselves extremely ignorant, gladly leave them completely in the dark on all matters connected with religion. I could never make them understand that the only reason for the Roman Christians making the sign of the Cross from left to right, while the Greeks make it from right to left, is that we say 'spiritus sancti', while they say 'agion pneuma'.

"If you said pneuma agion," I used to say, "then you would cross yourself like us, and if we said sancti spiritus we should cross ourselves like you."

"The adjective," replied my interlocutor, "should always precede the substantive, for we should never utter the name of God without first giving Him some honourable epithet."

Such are nearly all the differences which divide the two churches, without reckoning the numerous idle tales which they have as well as ourselves, and which are by no means the least cherished articles of their faith.

We returned to St. Petersburg by the way we had come, but Zaira would have liked me never to leave Moscow. She had become so much in love with me by force of constant association that I could not think without a pang of the moment of separation. The day after our arrival in the capital I took her to her home, where she shewed her father all the little presents I had given her, and told him of the honour she had received as my daughter, which made the good man laugh heartily.

The first piece of news I heard was that a ukase had been issued, ordering the erection of a temple dedicated to God in the Moscoi opposite to the house where I resided. The empress had entrusted Rinaldi, the architect, with the erection. He asked her what emblem he should put above the portal, and she replied,—

"No emblem at all, only the name of God in large letters."

"I will put a triangle."

"No triangle at all; but only the name of God in whatever language you like, and nothing more."

Page 26

The second piece of news was that Bomback had fled and had been captured at Mitau, where he believed himself in safety. M. de Simolia had arrested him. It was a grave case, for he had deserted; however, he was given his life, and sent into barracks at Kamstchatka. Crevecoeur and his mistress had departed, carrying some money with them, and a Florentine adventurer named Billotti had fled with eighteen thousand roubles belonging to Papanelopulo, but a certain Bori, the worthy Greek's factotum, had caught him at Mitau and brought him back to St. Petersburg, where he was now in prison. Prince Charles of Courland arrived about this time, and I hastened to call upon him as soon as he advised me of his coming. He was lodging in a house belonging to Count Dimidoff, who owned large iron mines, and had made the whole house of iron, from attic to basement. The prince had brought his mistress with him, but she was still in an ill-humour, and he was beginning to get heartily sick of her. The man was to be pitied, for he could not get rid of her without finding her a husband, and this husband became more difficult to find every day. When the prince saw how happy I was with my Zaira, he could not help thinking how easily happiness may be won; but the fatal desire for luxury and empty show spoils all, and renders the very sweets of life as bitter as gall.

I was indeed considered happy, and I liked to appear so, but in my heart I was wretched. Ever since my imprisonment under The Leads, I had been subject to haemorrhoids, which came on three or four times a year. At St. Petersburg I had a serious attack, and the daily pain and anxiety embittered my existence. A vegetarian doctor called Senapios, for whom I had sent, gave me the sad news that I had a blind or incomplete fistula in the rectum, and according to him nothing but the cruel pistoury would give me any relief, and indeed he said I had no time to lose. I had to agree, in spite of my dislike to the operation; but fortunately the clever surgeon whom the doctor summoned pronounced that if I would have patience nature itself would give me relief. I had much to endure, especially from the severe dieting to which I was subjected, but which doubtless did me good.

Colonel Melissino asked me to be present at a review which was to take place at three versts from St. Petersburg, and was to be succeeded by a dinner to twenty-four guests, given by General Orloff. I went with the prince, and saw a cannon fired twenty times in a minute, testing the performance with my watch.

My neighbour at dinner was the French ambassador. Wishing to drink deeply, after the Russian fashion, and thinking the Hungarian wine as innocent as champagne, he drank so bravely that at the end of dinner he had lost the use of his legs. Count Orloff made him drink still more, and then he fell asleep and was laid on a bed.

The gaiety of the meal gave me some idea of Russian wit. I did not understand the language, so M. Zinowieff translated the curious sallies to me while the applause they had raised was still resounding.

Page 27

Melissino rose to his feet, holding a large goblet full of Hungarian wine in his hand. There was a general silence to listen to him. He drank the health of General Orloff in these words:

“May you die when you become rich.”

The applause was general, for the allusion was to the unbounded generosity of Orloff. The general's reply struck me as better still, but it was equally rugged in character. He, too, took a full cup, and turning to Melissino, said,

“May you never die till I slay you!”

The applause was furious, for he was their host and their general.

The Russian wit is of the energetic kind, devoid of grace; all they care about is directness and vigour.

Voltaire had just sent the empress his “Philosophy of History,” which he had written for her and dedicated to her. A month after, an edition of three thousand copies came by sea, and was sold out in a week, for all the Russians who knew a little French were eager to possess a copy of the work. The leaders of the Voltaireans were two noblemen, named, respectively, Stroganoff and Schuvaloff. I have seen verses written by the former of these as good as Voltaire's own verses, and twenty years later I saw an ode by the latter of which Voltaire would not have been ashamed, but the subject was ill chosen; for it treated of the death of the great philosopher who had so studiously avoided using his pen on melancholy themes. In those days all Russians with any pretensions to literature read nothing but Voltaire, and when they had read all his writings they thought themselves as wise as their master. To me they seemed pigmies mimicking a giant. I told them that they ought to read all the books from which Voltaire had drawn his immense learning, and then, perhaps, they might become as wise as he. I remember the saying of a wise man at Rome: “Beware of the man of one book.” I wonder whether the Russians are more profound now; but that is a question I cannot answer. At Dresden I knew Prince Biloselski, who was on his way back to Russia after having been ambassador at Turin. He was the author of an admirable world on metaphysics, and the analysis of the soul and reason.

Count Panin was the tutor of Paul Petrovitch, heir-presumptive to the throne. The young prince had a severe master, and dared not even applaud an air at the opera unless he first received permission to do so from his mentor.

When a courier brought the news of the sudden death of Francis I., Emperor of Germany and of the Holy Roman Empire, the czarina being at Czarsko-Zelo, the count minister-tutor was in the palace with his pupil, then eleven years old. The courier came at noon, and gave the dispatch into the hands of the minister, who was standing in the

midst of a crowd of courtiers of whom I was one. The prince imperial was at his right hand. The minister read the dispatch in a low voice, and then said:

“This is news indeed. The Emperor of the Romans has died suddenly.”

Page 28

He then turned to Paul, and said to him,—

“Full court mourning, which your highness will observe for three months longer than the empress.”

“Why so?” said Paul.

“Because, as Duke of Holstein, your highness has a right to attend the diet of the empire, a privilege,” he added, turning to us, “which Peter the Great desired in vain.”

I noted the attention with which the Grand Duke Paul listened to his mentor, and the care with which he concealed his joy at the news. I was immensely pleased with this way of giving instruction. I said as much to Prince Lobkowitz, who was standing by me, and he refined on my praises. This prince was popular with everyone. He was even preferred to his predecessor, Prince Esterhazy; and this was saying a great deal, for Esterhazy was adored in Russia. The gay and affable manner of Prince Lobkowitz made him the life and soul of all the parties at which he was present. He was a constant courtier of the Countess Braun, the reigning beauty, and everyone believed his love had been crowned with success, though no one could assert as much positively.

There was a great review held at a distance of twelve or fourteen versts from St. Petersburg, at which the empress and all her train of courtiers were present. The houses of the two or three adjoining villages were so few and small that it would be impossible for all the company to find a lodging. Nevertheless I wished to be present chiefly to please Zaira, who wanted to be seen with me on such an occasion. The review was to last three days; there were to be fireworks, and a mine was to be exploded besides the evolutions of the troops. I went in my travelling carriage, which would serve me for a lodging if I could get nothing better.

We arrived at the appointed place at eight o'clock in the morning; the evolutions lasted till noon. When they were over we went towards a tavern and had our meal served to us in the carriage, as all the rooms in the inn were full.

After dinner my coachman tried in vain to find me a lodging, so I disposed myself to sleep all night in the carriage; and so I did for the whole time of the review, and fared better than those who had spent so much money to be ill lodged. Melissino told me that the empress thought my idea a very sensible one. As I was the only person who had a sleeping carriage, which was quite a portable house in itself, I had numerous visitors, and Zaira was radiant to be able to do the honours.

I had a good deal of conversation during the review with Count Tott, brother of the nobleman who was employed at Constantinople, and known as Baron Tott. We had known each other at Paris, and afterwards at the Hague, where I had the pleasure of being of service to him. He had come to St. Petersburg with Madame de Soltikoff,

whom he had met at Paris, and whose lover he was. He lived with her, went to Court, and was well received by everyone.

Page 29

Two or three years after, the empress ordered him to leave St. Petersburg on account of the troubles in Poland. It was said that he kept up a correspondence with his brother, who was endeavouring to intercept the fleet under the command of Alexis Orloff. I never heard what became of him after he left Russia, where he obliged me with the loan of five hundred roubles, which I have not yet been able to return to him.

M. Maruzzi, by calling a Venetian merchant, and by birth a Greek, having left trade to live like a gentleman, came to St. Petersburg when I was there, and was presented at Court. He was a fine-looking man, and was admitted to all the great houses. The empress treated him with distinction because she had thoughts of making him her agent at Venice. He paid his court to the Countess Braun, but he had rivals there who were not afraid of him. He was rich enough, but did not know how to spend his money; and avarice is a sin which meets with no pity from the Russian ladies.

I went to Czarsko-Zelo, Peterhoff, and Cronstadt, for if you want to say you have been in a country you should see as much as possible of it. I wrote notes and memorandums on several questions with the hope of their procuring me a place in the civil service, and all my productions were laid before the empress but with no effect. In Russia they do not think much of foreigners unless they have specially summoned them; those who come of their own account rarely make much, and I suspect the Russians are right.

CHAPTER XXI

I See the Empress—My Conversations with Her—The Valville—I Leave Zaiya I Leave St. Petersburg and Arrive at Warsaw—The Princes Adam Czartoryski and Sulkowski—The King of Poland—Theatrical Intrigues—Byanicki

I thought of leaving Russia at the beginning of the autumn, but I was told by M M. Panin and Alsuwieff that I ought not to go without having spoken to the empress.

“I should be sorry to do so,” I replied, “but as I can’t find anyone to present me to her, I must be resigned.”

At last Panin told me to walk in a garden frequented by her majesty at an early hour, and he said that meeting me, as it were by chance, she would probably speak to me. I told him I should like him to be with her, and he accordingly named a day.

I repaired to the garden, and as I walked about I marvelled at the statuary it contained, all the statues being made of the worst stone, and executed in the worst possible taste. The names cut beneath them gave the whole the air of a practical joke. A weeping statue was Democritus; another, with grinning mouth, was labelled Heraclitus; an old man with a long beard was Sappho; and an old woman, Avicenna; and so on.



As I was smiling at this extraordinary collection, I saw the czarina, preceded by Count Gregorius Orloff, and followed by two ladies, approaching. Count Panin was on her left hand. I stood by the hedge to let her pass, but as soon as she came up to me she asked, smilingly, if I had been interested in the statues. I replied, following her steps, that I presumed they had been placed there to impose on fools, or to excite the laughter of those acquainted with history.

Page 30

"From what I can make out," she replied, "the secret of the matter is that my worthy aunt was imposed on, and indeed she did not trouble herself much about such trifles. But I hope you have seen other things in Russia less ridiculous than these statues?"

I entertained the sovereign for more than an hour with my remarks on the things of note I had seen in St. Petersburg. The conversation happened to turn on the King of Prussia, and I sang his praises; but I censured his terrible habit of always interrupting the person whom he was addressing. Catherine smiled and asked me to tell her about the conversation I had had with this monarch, and I did so to the best of my ability. She was then kind enough to say that she had never seen me at the Court, which was a vocal and instrumental concert given at the palace, and open to all. I told her that I had only attended once, as I was so unfortunate as not to have a taste for music. At this she turned to Panin, and said smilingly that she knew someone else who had the same misfortune. If the reader remembers what I heard her say about music as she was leaving the opera, he will pronounce my speech to have been a very courtier-like one, and I confess it was; but who can resist making such speeches to a monarch, and above all, a monarch in petticoats?

The czarina turned from me to speak to M. Bezkoï, who had just come up, and as M. Panin left the garden I did so too, delighted with the honour I had had.

The empress, who was a woman of moderate height and yet of a majestic appearance, thoroughly understood the art of making herself loved. She was not beautiful, but yet she was sure of pleasing by her geniality and her wit, and also by that exquisite tact which made one forget the awfulness of the sovereign in the gentleness of the woman. A few days after, Count Partin told me that the empress had twice asked after me, and that this was a sure sign I had pleased her. He advised me to look out for another opportunity of meeting her, and said that for the future she would always tell me to approach whenever she saw me, and that if I wanted some employment she might possibly do something for me.

Though I did not know what employ I could ask for in that disagreeable country, I was glad to hear that I could have easy access to the Court. With that idea I walked in the garden every day, and here follows my second conversation with the empress. She saw me at a distance and sent an officer to fetch me into her presence. As everybody was talking of the tournament, which had to be postponed on account of the bad weather, she asked me if this kind of entertainment could be given at Venice. I told her some amusing stories on the subject of shows and spectacles, and in this relation I remarked that the Venetian climate was more pleasant than the Russian, for at Venice fine days were the rule, while at St. Petersburg they were the exception, though the year is younger there than anywhere else.

Page 31

"Yes," she said, "in your country it is eleven days older."

"Would it not be worthy of your majesty to put Russia on an equality with the rest of the world in this respect, by adopting the Gregorian calendar? All the Protestants have done so, and England, who adopted it fourteen years ago, has already gained several millions. All Europe is astonished that the old style should be suffered to exist in a country where the sovereign is the head of the Church, and whose capital contains an academy of science. It is thought that Peter the Great, who made the year begin in January, would have also abolished the old style if he had not been afraid of offending England, which then kept trade and commerce alive throughout your vast empire." "You know," she replied, with a sly smile, "that Peter the Great was not exactly a learned man."

"He was more than a man of learning, the immortal Peter was a genius of the first order. Instinct supplied the place of science with him; his judgment was always in the right. His vast genius, his firm resolve, prevented him from making mistakes, and helped him to destroy all those abuses which threatened to oppose his great designs."

Her majesty seemed to have heard me with great interest, and was about to reply when she noticed two ladies whom she summoned to her presence. To me she said,—

"I shall be delighted to reply to you at another time," and then turned towards the ladies.

The time came in eight or ten days, when I was beginning to think she had had enough of me, for she had seen me without summoning me to speak to her.

She began by saying what I desired should be done was done already. "All the letters sent to foreign countries and all the important State records are marked with both dates."

"But I must point out to your majesty that by the end of the century the difference will be of twelve days, not eleven."

"Not at all; we have seen to that. The last year of this century will not be counted as a leap year. It is fortunate that the difference is one of eleven days, for as that is the number which is added every year to the epact our epacts are almost the same. As to the celebration of Easter, that is a different question. Your equinox is on March the 21st, ours on the 10th, and the astronomers say we are both wrong; sometimes it is we who are wrong and sometimes you, as the equinox varies. You know you are not even in agreement with the Jews, whose calculation is said to be perfectly accurate; and, in fine, this difference in the time of celebrating Easter does not disturb in any way public order or the progress of the Government."

"Your majesty's words fill me with admiration, but the Festival of Christmas—— "

Page 32

“I suppose you are going to say that we do not celebrate Christmas in the winter solstice as should properly be done. We know it, but it seems to me a matter of no account. I would rather bear with this small mistake than grievously afflict vast numbers of my subjects by depriving them of their birthdays. If I did so, there would be no open complaints uttered, as that is not the fashion in Russia; but they would say in secret that I was an Atheist, and that I disputed the infallibility of the Council of Nice. You may think such complaints matter for laughter, but I do not, for I have much more agreeable motives for amusement.”

The czarina was delighted to mark my surprise. I did not doubt for a moment that she had made a special study of the whole subject. M. Alsuwieff told me, a few days after, that she had very possibly read a little pamphlet on the subject, the statements of which exactly coincided with her own. He took care to add, however, that it was very possible her highness was profoundly learned on the matter, but this was merely a courtier's phrase.

What she said was spoken modestly and energetically, and her good humour and pleasant smile remained unmoved throughout. She exercised a constant self-control over herself, and herein appeared the greatness of her character, for nothing is more difficult. Her demeanour, so different from that of the Prussian king, shewed her to be the greater sovereign of the two; her frank geniality always gave her the advantage, while the short, curt manners of the king often exposed him to being made a dupe. In an examination of the life of Frederick the Great, one cannot help paying a deserved tribute to his courage, but at the same time one feels that if it had not been for repeated turns of good fortune he must have succumbed, whereas Catherine was little indebted to the favours of the blind deity. She succeeded in enterprises which, before her time, would have been pronounced impossibilities, and it seemed her aim to make men look upon her achievements as of small account.

I read in one of our modern journals, those monuments of editorial self-conceit, that Catherine the Great died happily as she had lived. Everybody knows that she died suddenly on her close stool. By calling such a death happy, the journalist hints that it is the death he himself would wish for. Everyone to his taste, and we can only hope that the editor may obtain his wish; but who told this silly fellow that Catherine desired such a death? If he regards such a wish as natural to a person of her profound genius I would ask who told him that men of genius consider a sudden death to be a happy one? Is it because that is his opinion, and are we to conclude that he is therefore person of genius? To come to the truth we should have to interrogate the late empress, and ask her some such question as:

“Are you well pleased to have died suddenly?”

She would probably reply:

Page 33

"What a foolish question! Such might be the wish of one driven to despair, or of someone suffering from a long and grievous malady. Such was not my position, for I enjoyed the blessings of happiness and good health; no worse fate could have happened to me. My sudden death prevented me from concluding several designs which I might have brought to a successful issue if God had granted me the warning of a, slight illness. But it was not so; I had to set out on the long journey at a moment's notice, without the time to make any preparations. Is my death any the happier from my not foreseeing it? Do you think me such a coward as to dread the approach of what is common to all? I tell you that I should have accounted myself happy if I had had a respite of but a day. Then I should not complain of the Divine justice."

"Does your highness accuse God of injustice, then?"

"What boots it, since I am a lost soul? Do you expect the damned to acknowledge the justice of the decree which has consigned them to eternal woe?"

"No doubt it is a difficult matter, but I should have thought that a sense of the justice of your doom would have mitigated the pains of it."

"Perhaps so, but a damned soul must be without consolation for ever."

"In spite of that there are some philosophers who call you happy in your death by virtue of its suddenness."

"Not philosophers, but fools, for in its suddenness was the pain and woe."

"Well said; but may I ask your highness if you admit the possibility of a happy eternity after an unhappy death, or of an unhappy doom after a happy death?"

"Such suppositions are inconceivable. The happiness of futurity lies in the ecstasy of the soul in feeling freed from the trammels of matter, and unhappiness is the doom of a soul which was full of remorse at the moment it left the body. But enough, for my punishment forbids my farther speech."

"Tell me, at least, what is the nature of your punishment?"

"An everlasting weariness. Farewell."

After this long and fanciful digression the reader will no doubt be obliged by my returning to this world.

Count Panin told me that in a few days the empress would leave for her country house, and I determined to have an interview with her, foreseeing that it would be for the last time.



I had been in the garden for a few minutes when heavy rain began to fall, and I was going to leave, when the empress summoned me into an apartment on the ground floor of the palace, where she was walking up and down with Gregorovitch and a maid of honour.

"I had forgotten to ask you," she said, graciously, "if you believe the new calculation of the calendar to be exempt from error?"

"No, your majesty; but the error is so minute that it will not produce any sensible effect for the space of nine or ten thousand years."

Page 34

"I thought so; and in my opinion Pope Gregory should not have acknowledged any mistake at all. The Pope, however, had much less difficulty in carrying out his reform than I should have with my subjects, who are too fond of their ancient usages and customs." "Nevertheless, I am sure your majesty would meet with obedience." "No doubt, but imagine the grief of my clergy in not being able to celebrate the numerous saints' days, which would fall on the eleven days to be suppressed. You have only one saint for each day, but we have a dozen at least. I may remark also that all ancient states and kingdoms are attached to their ancient laws. I have heard that your Republic of Venice begins the year in March, and that seems to me, as it were, a monument and memorial of its antiquity—and indeed the year begins more naturally in March than in January—but does not this usage cause some confusion?"

"None at all, your majesty. The letters M V, which we adjoin to all dates in January and February, render all mistakes impossible."

"Venice is also noteworthy for its peculiar system of heraldry, by the amusing form under which it portrays its patron saint, and by the five Latin words with which the Evangelist is invoked, in which, as I am told, there is a grammatical blunder which has become respectable by its long standing. But is it true that you do not distinguish between the day and night hours?"

"It is, your majesty, and what is more we reckon the day from the beginning of the night."

"Such is the force of custom, which makes us admire what other nations think ridiculous. You see no inconvenience in your division of the day, which strikes me as most inconvenient."

"You would only have to look at your watch, and you would not need to listen for the cannon shot which announces the close of day."

"Yes, but for this one advantage you have over us, we have two over you. We know that at twelve o'clock it is either mid-day or midnight."

The czarina spoke to me about the fondness of the Venetians for games of chance, and asked if the Genoa Lottery had been established there. "I have been asked," she added, "to allow the lottery to be established in my own dominions; but I should never permit it except on the condition that no stake should be below a rouble, and then the poor people would not be able to risk their money in it."

I replied to this discreet observation with a profound inclination of the head, and thus ended my last interview with the famous empress who reigned thirty-five years without committing a single mistake of any importance. The historian will always place her

amongst great sovereigns, though the moralist will always consider her, and rightly, as one of the most notable of dissolute women.

A few days before I left I gave an entertainment to my friends at Catherinhoff, winding up with a fine display of fireworks, a present from my friend Melissino. My supper for thirty was exquisite, and my ball a brilliant one. In spite of the tenuity of my purse I felt obliged to give my friends this mark of my gratitude for the kindness they had lavished on me.

Page 35

I left Russia with the actress Valville, and I must here tell the reader how I came to make her acquaintance.

I happened to go to the French play, and to find myself seated next to an extremely pretty lady who was unknown to me. I occasionally addressed an observation to her referring to the play or actors, and I was immensely delighted with her spirited answers. Her expression charmed me, and I took the liberty of asking her if she were a Russian.

"No, thank God!" she replied, "I am a Parisian, and an actress by occupation. My name is Valville; but I don't wonder I am unknown to you, for I have been only a month here, and have played but once."

"How is that?"

"Because I was so unfortunate as to fail to win the czarina's favour. However, as I was engaged for a year, she has kindly ordered that my salary of a hundred roubles shall be paid monthly. At the end of the year I shall get my passport and go."

"I am sure the empress thinks she is doing you a favour in paying you for nothing."

"Very likely; but she does not remember that I am forgetting how to act all this time."

"You ought to tell her that."

"I only wish she would give me an audience."

"That is unnecessary. Of course, you have a lover."

"No, I haven't."

"It's incredible to me!"

"They say the incredible often happens."

"I am very glad to hear it myself."

I took her address, and sent her the following note the next day:

"Madam,—I should like to begin an intrigue with you. You have inspired me with feelings that will make me unhappy unless you reciprocate them. I beg to take the liberty of asking myself to sup with you, but please tell me how much it will cost me. I am obliged to leave for Warsaw in the course of a month, and I shall be happy to offer you a place in my travelling carriage. I shall be able to get you a passport. The bearer of this has orders to wait, and I hope your answer will be as plainly worded as my question."

In two hours I received this reply:

“Sir,—As I have the knack of putting an end to an intrigue when it has ceased to amuse me, I have no hesitation in accepting your proposal. As to the sentiments with which you say I have inspired you, I will do my best to share them, and to make you happy. Your supper shall be ready, and later on we will settle the price of the dessert. I shall be delighted to accept the place in your carriage if you can obtain my expenses to Paris as well as my passport. And finally, I hope you will find my plain speaking on a match with yours. Good bye, till the evening.”

I found my new friend in a comfortable lodging, and we accosted each other as if we had been old acquaintances.

“I shall be delighted to travel with you,” said she, “but I don’t think you will be able to get my passport.”

Page 36

"I have no doubt as to my success," I replied, "if you will present to the empress the petition I shall draft for you."

"I will surely do so," said she, giving me writing materials.

I wrote out the following petition,—

"Your Majesty,—I venture to remind your highness that my enforced idleness is making me forget my art, which I have not yet learnt thoroughly. Your majesty's generosity is therefore doing me an injury, and your majesty would do me a great benefit in giving me permission to leave St. Petersburg."

"Nothing more than that?"

"Not a word."

"You say nothing about the passport, and nothing about the journey-money. I am not a rich woman."

"Do you only present this petition; and, unless I am very much mistaken, you will have, not only your journey-money, but also your year's salary."

"Oh, that would be too much!"

"Not at all. You do not know Catherine, but I do. Have this copied, and present it in person."

"I will copy it out myself, for I can write a good enough hand. Indeed, it almost seems as if I had composed it; it is exactly my style. I believe you are a better actor than I am, and from this evening I shall call myself your pupil. Come, let us have some supper, that you may give me my first lesson."

After a delicate supper, seasoned by pleasant and witty talk, Madame Valville granted me all I could desire. I went downstairs for a moment to send away my coachman and to instruct him what he was to say to Zaira, whom I had forewarned that I was going to Cronstadt, and might not return till the next day. My coachman was a Ukrainian on whose fidelity I could rely, but I knew that it would be necessary for me to be off with the old love before I was on with the new.

Madame Valville was like most young Frenchwomen of her class; she had charms which she wished to turn to account, and a passable education; her ambition was to be kept by one man, and the title of mistress was more pleasing in her ears than that of wife.

In the intervals of four amorous combats she told me enough of her life for me to divine what it had been. Clerval, the actor, had been gathering together a company of actors at Paris, and making her acquaintance by chance and finding her to be intelligent, he assured her that she was a born actress, though she had never suspected it. The idea had dazzled her, and she had signed the agreement. She started from Paris with six other actors and actresses, of whom she was the only one that had never played.

“I thought,” she said, “it was like what is done at Paris, where a girl goes into the chorus or the ballet without having learnt to sing or dance. What else could I think, after an actor like Clerval had assured me I had a talent for acting and had offered me a good engagement? All he required of me was that I should learn by heart and repeat certain passages which I rehearsed in his presence. He said I made a capital soubrette, and he certainly could not have been trying to deceive me, but the fact is he was deceived himself. A fortnight after my arrival I made my first appearance, and my reception was not a flattering one.”

Page 37

"Perhaps you were nervous?"

"Nervous? not in the least. Clerval said that if I could have put on the appearance of nervousness the empress, who is kindness itself, would certainly have encouraged me."

I left her the next morning after I had seen her copy out the petition. She wrote a very good hand.

"I shall present it to-day," said she.

I wished her good luck, and arranged to sup with her again on the day I meant to part with Zaira.

All French girls who sacrifice to Venus are in the same style as the Valville; they are entirely without passion or love, but they are pleasant and caressing. They have only one object; and that is their own profit. They make and unmake an intrigue with a smiling face and without the slightest difficulty. It is their system, and if it be not absolutely the best it is certainly the most convenient.

When I got home I found Zaira submissive but sad, which annoyed me more than anger would have done, for I loved her. However, it was time to bring the matter to an end, and to make up my mind to endure the pain of parting.

Rinaldi, the architect, a man of seventy, but still vigorous and sensual, was in love with her, and he had hinted to me several times that he would be only too happy to take her over and to pay double the sum I had given for her. My answer had been that I could only give her to a man she liked, and that I meant to make her a present of the hundred roubles I had given for her. Rinaldi did not like this answer, as he had not very strong hopes of the girl taking a fancy to him; however, he did not despair.

He happened to call on me on the very morning on which I had determined to give her up, and as he spoke Russian perfectly he gave Zaira to understand how much he loved her. Her answer was that he must apply to me, as my will was law to her, but that she neither liked nor disliked anyone else. The old man could not obtain any more positive reply and left us with but feeble hopes, but commending himself to my good offices.

When he had gone, I asked Zaira whether she would not like me to leave her to the worthy man, who would treat her as his own daughter.

She was just going to reply when I was handed a note from Madame Valville, asking me to call on her, as she had a piece of news to give me. I ordered the carriage immediately, telling Zaira that I should not be long.

"Very good," she replied, "I will give you a plain answer when you come back."

I found Madame Valville in a high state of delight.

“Long live the petition!” she exclaimed, as soon as she saw me. “I waited for the empress to come out of her private chapel. I respectfully presented my petition, which she read as she walked along, and then told me with a kindly smile to wait a moment. I waited, and her majesty returned me the petition initialled in her own hand, and bade me take it to M. Ghelagin. This gentleman gave me an excellent reception, and told me that the sovereign hand ordered him to give me my passport, my salary for a year, and a hundred ducats for the journey. The money will be forwarded in a fortnight, as my name will have to be sent to the Gazette.”

Page 38

Madame Valville was very grateful, and we fixed the day of our departure. Three or four days later I sent in my name to the Gazette.

I had promised Zaira to come back, so telling my new love that I would come and live with her as soon as I had placed the young Russian in good hands, I went home, feeling rather curious to hear Zaira's determination.

After Zaira had supped with me in perfect good humour, she asked if M. Rinaldi would pay me back the money I had given for her. I said he would, and she went on,—

"It seems to me that I am worth more than I was, for I have all your presents, and I know Italian."

"You are right, dear, but I don't want it to be said that I have made a profit on you; besides, I intend to make you a present of the hundred roubles."

"As you are going to make me such a handsome present, why not send me back to my father's house? That would be still more generous. If M. Rinaldi really loves me, he can come and talk it over with my father. You have no objection to his paying me whatever sum I like to mention."

"Not at all. On the contrary, I shall be very glad to serve your family, and all the more as Rinaldi is a rich man."

"Very good; you will be always dear to me in my memory. You shall take me to my home to-morrow; and now let us go to bed."

Thus it was that I parted with this charming girl, who made me live soberly all the time I was at St. Petersburg. Zinowieff told me that if I had liked to deposit a small sum as security I could have taken her with me; but I had thought the matter over, and it seemed to me that as Zaira grew more beautiful and charming I should end by becoming a perfect slave to her. Possibly, however, I should not have looked into matters so closely if I had not been in love with Madame Valville.

Zaira spent the next morning in gathering together her belongings, now laughing and now weeping, and every time that she left her packing to give me a kiss I could not resist weeping myself. When I restored her to her father, the whole family fell on their knees around me. Alas for poor human nature! thus it is degraded by the iron heel of oppression. Zaira looked oddly in the humble cottage, where one large mattress served for the entire family.

Rinaldi took everything in good part. He told me that since the daughter would make no objection he had no fear of the father doing so. He went to the house the next day, but he did not get the girl till I had left St. Petersburg. He kept her for the remainder of his days, and behaved very handsomely to her.

After this melancholy separation Madame Valville became my sole mistress, and we left the Russian capital in the course of a few weeks. I took an Armenian merchant into my service; he had lent me a hundred ducats, and cooked very well in the Eastern style. I had a letter from the Polish resident to Prince Augustus Sulkowski, and another from the English ambassador for Prince Adam Czartoryski.

Page 39

The day after we left St. Petersburg we stopped at Koporie to dine; we had taken with us some choice viands and excellent wines. Two days later we met the famous chapel-master, Galuppi or Buranelli, who was on his way to St. Petersburg with two friends and an artiste. He did not know me, and was astonished to find a Venetian dinner awaiting him at the inn, as also to hear a greeting in his mother tongue. As soon as I had pronounced my name he embraced me with exclamations of surprise and joy.

The roads were heavy with rain, so we were a week in getting to Riga, and when we arrived I was sorry to hear that Prince Charles was not there. From Riga, we were four days before getting to Konigsberg, where Madame Valville, who was expected at Berlin, had to leave me. I left her my Armenian, to whom she gladly paid the hundred ducats I owed him. I saw her again two years later, and shall speak of the meeting in due time.

We separated like good friends, without any sadness. We spent the night at Klein Roop, near Riga, and she offered to give me her diamonds, her jewels, and all that she possessed. We were staying with the Countess Lowenwald, to whom I had a letter from the Princess Dolgorouki. This lady had in her house, in the capacity of governess, the pretty English woman whom I had known as Campioni's wife. She told me that her husband was at Warsaw, and that he was living with Villiers. She gave me a letter for him, and I promised to make him send her some money, and I kept my word. Little Betty was as charming as ever, but her mother seemed quite jealous of her and treated her ill.

When I reached Konigsberg I sold my travelling carriage and took a place in a coach for Warsaw. We were four in all, and my companions only spoke German and Polish, so that I had a dreadfully tedious journey. At Warsaw I went to live with Villiers, where I hoped to meet Campioni.

It was not long before I saw him, and found him well in health and in comfortable quarters. He kept a dancing school, and had a good many pupils. He was delighted to have news of Fanny and his children. He sent them some money, but had no thoughts of having them at Warsaw, as Fanny wished. He assured me she was not his wife.

He told me that Tomatis, the manager of the comic opera, had made a fortune, and had in his company a Milanese dancer named Catai, who enchanted all the town by her charms rather than her talent. Games of chance were permitted, but he warned me that Warsaw was full of card-sharpers. A Veronese named Giropoldi, who lived with an officer from Lorrain called Bachelier, held a bank at faro at her house, where a dancer, who had been the mistress of the famous Afflisio at Vienna, brought customers.

Major Sadir, whom I have mentioned before, kept another gaming-house, in company with his mistress, who came from Saxony. The Baron de St. Heleine was also in Warsaw, but his principal occupation was to contract debts which he did not mean to pay. He also lived in Villier's house with his pretty and virtuous young wife, who would

have nothing to say to us. Campioni told me of some other adventurers, whose names I was very glad to know that I might the better avoid them.

Page 40

The day after my arrival I hired a man and a carriage, the latter being an absolute necessity at Warsaw, where in my time, at all events, it was impossible to go on foot. I reached the capital of Poland at the end of October, 1765.

My first call was on Prince Adam Czartoryski, Lieutenant of Podolia, for whom I had an introduction. I found him before a table covered with papers, surrounded by forty or fifty persons, in an immense library which he had made into his bedroom. He was married to a very pretty woman, but had not yet had a child by her because she was too thin for his taste.

He read the long letter I gave him, and said in elegant French that he had a very high opinion of the writer of the letter; but that as he was very busy just then he hoped I would come to supper with him if I had nothing better to do.

I drove off to Prince Sulkowski, who had just been appointed ambassador to the Court of Louis XV. The prince was the elder of four brothers and a man of great understanding, but a theorist in the style of the Abbe St. Pierre. He read the letter, and said he wanted to have a long talk with me; but that being obliged to go out he would be obliged if I would come and dine with him at four o'clock. I accepted the invitation.

I then went to a merchant named Schempinski, who was to pay me fifty ducats a month on Papanelopulo's order. My man told me that there was a public rehearsal of a new opera at the theatre, and I accordingly spent three hours there, knowing none and unknown to all. All the actresses were pretty, but especially the Catai, who did not know the first elements of dancing. She was greatly applauded, above all by Prince Repnin, the Russian ambassador, who seemed a person of the greatest consequence.

Prince Sulkowski kept me at table for four mortal hours, talking on every subject except those with which I happened to be acquainted. His strong points were politics and commerce, and as he found my mind a mere void on these subjects, he shone all the more, and took quite a fancy to me, as I believe, because he found me such a capital listener.

About nine o'clock, having nothing better to do (a favourite phrase with the Polish noblemen), I went to Prince Adam, who after pronouncing my name introduced me to the company. There were present Monseigneur Krasinski, the Prince-Bishop of Warmia, the Chief Prothonotary Rzewuski, whom I had known at St. Petersburg, the Palatin Oginski, General Roniker, and two others whose barbarous names I have forgotten. The last person to whom he introduced me was his wife, with whom I was very pleased. A few moments after a fine-looking gentleman came into the room, and everybody stood up. Prince Adam pronounced my name, and turning to me said, coolly,

—
“That's the king.”

Page 41

This method of introducing a stranger to a sovereign prince was assuredly not an overwhelming one, but it was nevertheless a surprise; and I found that an excess of simplicity may be as confusing as the other extreme. At first I thought the prince might be making a fool of me; but I quickly put aside the idea, and stepped forward and was about to kneel, but his majesty gave me his hand to kiss with exquisite grace, and as he was about to address me, Prince Adam shewed him the letter of the English ambassador, who was well known to the king. The king read it, still standing, and began to ask me questions about the Czarina and the Court, appearing to take great interest in my replies.

When supper was announced the king continued to talk, and led me into the supper-room, and made me sit down at his right hand. Everybody ate heartily except the king, who appeared to have no appetite, and myself, who had no right to have any appetite, even if I had not dined well with Prince Sulkowski, for I saw the whole table hushed to listen to my replies to the king's questions.

After supper the king began to comment very graciously on my answers. His majesty spoke simply but with great elegance. As he was leaving he told me he should always be delighted to see me at his Court, and Prince Adam said that if I liked to be introduced to his father, I had only to call at eleven o'clock the next morning.

The King of Poland was of a medium height, but well made. His face was not a handsome one, but it was kindly and intelligent. He was rather short-sighted, and his features in repose bore a somewhat melancholy expression; but in speaking, the whole face seemed to light up. All he said was seasoned by a pleasant wit.

I was well enough pleased with this interview, and returned to my inn, where I found Campioni seated amongst several guests of either sex, and after staying with them for half an hour I went to bed.

At eleven o'clock the next day I was presented to the great Russian Paladin. He was in his dressing-gown, surrounded by his gentlemen in the national costume. He was standing up and conversing with his followers in a kindly but grave manner. As soon as his son Adam mentioned my name, he unbent and gave me a most kindly yet dignified welcome. His manners were not awful, nor did they inspire one with familiarity, and I thought him likely to be a good judge of character. When I told him that I had only gone to Russia to amuse myself and see good company, he immediately concluded that my aims in coming to Poland were of the same kind; and he told me that he could introduce me to a large circle. He added that he should be glad to see me to dinner and supper whenever I had no other engagements.

Page 42

He went behind a screen to complete his toilette, and soon appeared in the uniform of his regiment, with a fair peruke in the style of the late King Augustus II. He made a collective bow to everyone, and went to see his wife, who was recovering from a disease which would have proved fatal if it had not been for the skill of Reimann, a pupil of the great Boerhaave. The lady came of the now extinct family of Enoff, whose immense wealth she brought to her husband. When he married her he abandoned the Maltese Order, of which he had been a knight. He won his bride by a duel with pistols on horseback. The lady had promised that her hand should be the conqueror's guerdon, and the prince was so fortunate as to kill his rival. Of this marriage there issued Prince Adam and a daughter, now a widow, and known under the name of Lubomirska, but formerly under that of Strasnikowa, that being the title of the office her husband held in the royal army.

It was this prince palatine and his brother, the High Chancellor of Lithuania, who first brought about the Polish troubles. The two brothers were discontented with their position at the Court where Count Bruhl was supreme, and put themselves at the head of the plot for dethroning the king, and for placing on the throne, under Russian protection, their young nephew, who had originally gone to St. Petersburg as an attache at the embassy, and afterwards succeeded in winning the favour of Catherine, then Grand Duchess, but soon to become empress.

This young man was Stanislas Poniatowski, son of Constance Czartoryski and the celebrated Poniatowski, the friend of Charles III. As luck would have it, a revolution was unnecessary to place him on the throne, for the king died in 1763, and gave place to Prince Poniatowski, who was chosen king on the 6th of September, 1776, under the title of Stanislas Augustus I. He had reigned two years at the time of my visit; and I found Warsaw in a state of gaiety, for a diet was to be held and everyone wished to know how it was that Catherine had given the Poles a native king.

At dinner-time I went to the paladin's and found three tables, at each of which there were places for thirty, and this was the usual number entertained by the prince. The luxury of the Court paled before that of the paladin's house. Prince Adam said to me,

"Chevalier, your place will always be at my father's table."

This was a great honour, and I felt it. The prince introduced me to his handsome sister, and to several palatins and starosts. I did not fail to call on all these great personages, so in the course of a fortnight I found myself a welcome guest in all the best houses.

My purse was too lean to allow of my playing or consoling myself with a theatrical beauty, so I fell back on the library of Monseigneur Zalewski, the Bishop of Kiowia, for whom I had taken a great liking. I spent almost all my mornings with him, and it was from this prelate that I learnt all the intrigues and complots by which the ancient Polish constitution, of which the bishop was a great admirer, had been overturned. Unhappily,

his firmness was of no avail, and a few months after I left Warsaw the Russian tyrants arrested him and he was exiled to Siberia.

Page 43

I lived calmly and peaceably, and still look back upon those days with pleasure. I spent my afternoons with the paladin playing tressette an Italian game of which he was very fond, and which I played well enough for the paladin to like to have me as a partner.

In spite of my sobriety and economy I found myself in debt three months after my arrival, and I did not know where to turn for help. The fifty ducats per month, which were sent me from Venice, were insufficient, for the money I had to spend on my carriage, my lodging, my servant, and my dress brought me down to the lowest ebb, and I did not care to appeal to anyone. But fortune had a surprise in store for me, and hitherto she had never left me.

Madame Schmit, whom the king for good reasons of his own had accommodated with apartments in the palace, asked me one evening to sup with her, telling me that the king would be of the party. I accepted the invitation, and I was delighted to find the delightful Bishop Kraswiski, the Abbe Guigiotti, and two or three other amateurs of Italian literature. The king, whose knowledge of literature was extensive, began to tell anecdotes of classical writers, quoting manuscript authorities which reduced me to silence, and which were possibly invented by him. Everyone talked except myself, and as I had had no dinner I ate like an ogre, only replying by monosyllables when politeness obliged me to say something. The conversation turned on Horace, and everyone gave his opinion on the great materialist's philosophy, and the Abbe Guigiotti obliged me to speak by saying that unless I agreed with him I should not keep silence.

"If you take my silence for consent to your extravagant eulogium of Horace," I said, "you are mistaken; for in my opinion the 'nec cum venari volet poemata panges', of which you think so much, is to my mind a satire devoid of delicacy."

"Satire and delicacy are hard to combine."

"Not for Horace, who succeeded in pleasing the great Augustus, and rendering him immortal as the protector of learned men. Indeed other sovereigns seem to vie with him by taking his name and even by disguising it."

The king (who had taken the name of Augustus himself) looked grave and said,—

"What sovereigns have adopted a disguised form of the name Augustus?"

"The first king of Sweden, who called himself Gustavus, which is only an anagram of Augustus."

"That is a very amusing idea, and worth more than all the tales we have told. Where did you find that?"

"In a manuscript at Wolfenbuttel."

The king laughed loudly, though he himself had been citing manuscripts. But he returned to the charge and said,—

“Can you cite any passage of Horace (not in manuscript) where he shews his talent for delicacy and satire?”

“Sir, I could quote several passages, but here is one which seems to me very good: ‘Coyam rege’, says the poet, ‘sua de paupertate tacentes, plus quam pocentes ferent.’”

Page 44

“True indeed,” said the king, with a smile.

Madame Schmit, who did not know Latin, and inherited curiosity from her mother, and eventually from Eve, asked the bishop what it meant, and he thus translated it:

“They that speak not of their necessities in the presence of a king, gain more than they that are ever asking.”

The lady remarked that she saw nothing satirical in this.

After this it was my turn to be silent again; but the king began to talk about Ariosto, and expressed a desire to read it with me. I replied with an inclination of the head, and Horace’s words: ‘Tempora quoeram’.

Next morning, as I was coming out from mass, the generous and unfortunate Stanislas Augustus gave me his hand to kiss, and at the same time slid a roll of money into my hand, saying,—

“Thank no one but Horace, and don’t tell anyone about it.”

The roll contained two hundred ducats, and I immediately paid off my debts. Since then I went almost every morning to the king’s closet, where he was always glad to see his courtiers, but there was no more said about reading Ariosto. He knew Italian, but not enough to speak it, and still less to appreciate the beauties of the great poet. When I think of this worthy prince, and of the great qualities he possessed as a man, I cannot understand how he came to commit so many errors as a king. Perhaps the least of them all was that he allowed himself to survive his country. As he could not find a friend to kill him, I think he should have killed himself. But indeed he had no need to ask a friend to do him this service; he should have imitated the great Kosciuszko, and entered into life eternal by the sword of a Russian.

The carnival was a brilliant one. All Europe seemed to have assembled at Warsaw to see the happy being whom fortune had so unexpectedly raised to a throne, but after seeing him all were agreed that, in his case at all events, the deity had been neither blind nor foolish. Perhaps, however, he liked shewing himself rather too much. I have detected him in some distress on his being informed that there was such a thing as a stranger in Warsaw who had not seen him. No one had any need of an introduction, for his Court was, as all Courts should be, open to everyone, and when he noticed a strange face he was the first to speak.

Here I must set down an event which took place towards the end of January. It was, in fact, a dream; and, as I think I have confessed before, superstition had always some hold on me.

I dreamt I was at a banquet, and one of the guests threw a bottle at my face, that the blood poured forth, that I ran my sword through my enemy's body, and jumped into a carriage, and rode away.

Prince Charles of Courland came to Warsaw, and asked me to dine with him at Prince Poninski's, the same that became so notorious, and was afterwards proscribed and shamefully dishonoured. His was a hospitable house, and he was surrounded by his agreeable family. I had never called on him, as he was not a 'persona grata' to the king or his relations.

Page 45

In the course of the dinner a bottle of champagne burst, and a piece of broken glass struck me just below the eye. It cut a vein, and the blood gushed over my face, over my clothes, and even over the cloth. Everybody rose, my wound was bound up, the cloth was changed, and the dinner went on merrily. I was surprised at the likeness between my dream and this incident, while I congratulated myself on the happy difference between them. However, it all came true after a few months.

Madame Binetti, whom I had last seen in London, arrived at Warsaw with her husband and Pic the dancer. She had a letter of introduction to the king's brother, who was a general in the Austrian service, and then resided at Warsaw. I heard that the day they came, when I was at supper at the palatin's. The king was present, and said he should like to keep them in Warsaw for a week and see them dance, if a thousand ducats could do it.

I went to see Madame Binetti and to give her the good news the next morning. She was very much surprised to meet me in Warsaw, and still more so at the news I gave her. She called Pic who seemed undecided, but as we were talking it over, Prince Poniatowski came in to acquaint them with his majesty's wishes, and the offer was accepted. In three days Pic arranged a ballet; the costumes, the scenery, the music, the dancers—all were ready, and Tomatis put it on handsomely to please his generous master. The couple gave such satisfaction that they were engaged for a year. The Catai was furious, as Madame Binetti threw her completely into the shade, and, worse still, drew away her lovers. Tomatis, who was under the Catai's influence, made things so unpleasant for Madame Binetti that the two dancers became deadly enemies.

In ten or twelve days Madame Binetti was settled in a well-furnished house; her plate was simple but good, her cellar full of excellent wine, her cook an artist and her adorers numerous, amongst them being Moszcuski and Branicki, the king's friends.

The pit was divided into two parties, for the Catai was resolved to make a stand against the new comer, though her talents were not to be compared to Madame Binetti's. She danced in the first ballet, and her rival in the second. Those who applauded the first greeted that second in dead silence, and vice versa. I had great obligations towards Madame Binetti, but my duty also drew me towards the Catai, who numbered in her party all the Czartoryskis and their following, Prince Lubomirski, and other powerful nobles. It was plain that I could not desert to Madame Binetti without earning the contempt of the other party.

Madame Binetti reproached me bitterly, and I laid the case plainly before her. She agreed that I could not do otherwise, but begged me to stay away from the theatre in future, telling me that she had got a rod in pickle for Tomatis which would make him repent of his impertinence. She called me her oldest friend; and indeed I was very fond of her, and cared nothing for the Catai despite her prettiness.

Page 46

Xavier Branicki, the royal Postoli, Knight of the White Eagle, Colonel of Uhlans, the king's friend, was the chief adorer of Madame Binetti. The lady probably confided her displeasure to him, and begged him to take vengeance on the manager, who had committed so many offences against her. Count Branicki in his turn probably promised to avenge her quarrel, and, if no opportunity of doing so arose, to create an opportunity. At least, this is the way in which affairs of this kind are usually managed, and I can find no better explanation for what happened. Nevertheless, the way in which the Pole took vengeance was very original and extraordinary.

On the 20th of February Branicki went to the opera, and, contrary to his custom, went to the Catai's dressing-room, and began to pay his court to the actress, Tomatis being present. Both he and the actress concluded that Branicki had had a quarrel with her rival, and though she did not much care to place him in the number of her adorers, she yet gave him a good reception, for she knew it would be dangerous to despise his suit openly.

When the Catai had completed her toilet, the gallant postoli offered her his arm to take her to her carriage, which was at the door. Tomatis followed, and I too was there, awaiting my carriage. Madame Catai came down, the carriage-door was opened, she stepped in, and Branicki got in after her, telling the astonished Tomatis to follow them in the other carriage. Tomatis replied that he meant to ride in his own carriage, and begged the colonel to get out. Branicki paid no attention, and told the coachman to drive on. Tomatis forbade him to stir, and the man, of course, obeyed his master. The gallant postoli was therefore obliged to get down, but he bade his hussar give Tomatis a box on the ear, and this order was so promptly and vigorously obeyed that the unfortunate man was on the ground before he had time to recollect that he had a sword. He got up eventually and drove off, but he could eat no supper, no doubt because he had a blow to digest. I was to have supped with him, but after this scene I had really not the face to go. I went home in a melancholy and reflective mood, wondering whether the whole had been concerted; but I concluded that this was impossible, as neither Branicki nor Binetti could have foreseen the impoliteness and cowardice of Tomatis.

In the next chapter the reader will see how tragically the matter ended.

CHAPTER XXII

My Duel with Branicki—My Journey to Leopold and Return to Warsaw—I Receive the Order to Leave—My Departure with the Unknown One

Page 47

On reflection I concluded that Branicki had not done an ungentlemanly thing in getting into Tomatis's carriage; he had merely behaved with impetuosity, as if he were the Catai's lover. It also appeared to me that, considering the affront he had received from the jealous Italian, the box on the ear was a very moderate form of vengeance. A blow is bad, of course, but not so bad as death; and Branicki might very well have run his sword through the manager's body. Certainly, if Branicki had killed him he would have been stigmatised as an assassin, for though Tomatis had a sword the Polish officer's servants would never have allowed him to draw it, nevertheless I could not help thinking that Tomatis should have tried to take the servant's life, even at the risk of his own. He wanted no more courage for that than in ordering the king's favourite to come out of the carriage. He might have foreseen that the Polish noble would be stung to the quick, and would surely attempt to take speedy vengeance.

The next day the encounter was the subject of all conversations. Tomatis remained indoors for a week, calling for vengeance in vain. The king told him he could do nothing for him, as Branicki maintained he had only given insult for insult. I saw Tomatis, who told me in confidence that he could easily take vengeance, but that it would cost him too dear. He had spent forty thousand ducats on the two ballets, and if he had avenged himself he would have lost it nearly all, as he would be obliged to leave the kingdom. The only consolation he had was that his great friends were kinder to him than ever, and the king himself honoured him with peculiar attention. Madame Binetti was triumphant. When I saw her she condoled with me ironically on the mishap that had befallen my friend. She wearied me; but I could not guess that Branicki had only acted at her instigation, and still less that she had a grudge against me. Indeed, if I had known it, I should only have laughed at her, for I had nothing to dread from her bravo's dagger. I had never seen him nor spoken to him; he could have no opportunity for attacking me. He was never with the king in the morning and never went to the palatin's to supper, being an unpopular character with the Polish nobility. This Branicki was said to have been originally a Cossack, Branecki by name. He became the king's favorite and assumed the name of Branicki, pretending to be of the same family as the illustrious marshal of that name who was still alive; but he, far from recognizing the pretender, ordered his shield to be broken up and buried with him as the last of the race. However that may be, Branicki was the tool of the Russian party, the determined enemy of those who withstood Catherine's design of Russianising the ancient Polish constitution. The king liked him out of habit, and because he had peculiar obligations to him.

The life I lived was really exemplary. I indulged neither in love affairs nor gaming. I worked for the king, hoping to become his secretary. I paid my court to the princess-palatine, who liked my company, and I played tressette with the palatin himself.

Page 48

On the 4th of March, St. Casimir's Eve, there was a banquet at Court to which I had the honour to be invited. Casimir was the name of the king's eldest brother, who held the office of grand chamberlain. After dinner the king asked me if I intended going to the theatre, where a Polish play was to be given for the first time. Everybody was interested in this novelty, but it was a matter of indifference to me as I did not understand the language, and I told the king as much.

"Never mind," said he, "come in my box."

This was too flattering an invitation to be refused, so I obeyed the royal command and stood behind the king's chair. After the second act a ballet was given, and the dancing of Madame Caracci, a Piedmontese, so pleased his majesty that he went to the unusual pains of clapping her.

I only knew the dancer by sight, for I had never spoken to her. She had some talents. Her principal admirer was Count Poninski, who was always reproaching me when I dined with him for visiting the other dancers to the exclusion of Madame Caracci. I thought of his reproach at the time, and determined to pay her a visit after the ballet to congratulate her on her performance and the king's applause. On my way I passed by Madame Binetti's dressing-room, and seeing the door open I stayed a moment. Count Branicki came up, and I left with a bow and passed on to Madame Caracci's dressing-room. She was astonished to see me, and began with kindly reproaches for my neglect; to which I replied with compliments, and then giving her a kiss I promised to come and see her.

Just as I embraced her who should enter but Branicki, whom I had left a moment before with Madame Binetti. He had clearly followed me in the hopes of picking a quarrel. He was accompanied by Bininski, his lieutenant-colonel. As soon as he appeared, politeness made me stand up and turn to go, but he stopped me.

"It seems to me I have come at a bad time; it looks as if you loved this lady."

"Certainly, my lord; does not your excellency consider her as worthy of love?"

"Quite so; but as it happens I love her too, and I am not the man to bear any rivals."

"As I know that, I shall love her no more."

"Then you give her up?"

"With all my heart; for everyone must yield to such a noble as you are."

"Very good; but I call a man that yields a coward."

"Isn't that rather a strong expression?"

As I uttered these words I looked proudly at him and touched the hilt of my sword. Three or four officers were present and witnessed what passed.

I had hardly gone four paces from the dressing-room when I heard myself called “Venetian coward.” In spite of my rage I restrained myself, and turned back saying, coolly and firmly, that perhaps a Venetian coward might kill a brave Pole outside the theatre; and without awaiting a reply I left the building by the chief staircase.

Page 49

I waited vainly outside the theatre for a quarter of an hour with my sword in my hand, for I was not afraid of losing forty thousand ducats like Tomatis. At last, half perishing with cold, I called my carriage and drove to the palatin's, where the king was to sup.

The cold and loneliness began to cool my brain, and I congratulated myself on my self-restraint in not drawing my sword in the actress's dressing-room; and I felt glad that Branicki had not followed me down the stairs, for his friend Bininski had a sabre, and I should probably have been assassinated.

Although the Poles are polite enough, there is still a good deal of the old leaven in them. They are still Dacians and Samaritans at dinner, in war, and in friendship, as they call it, but which is often a burden hardly to be borne. They can never understand that a man may be sufficient company for himself, and that it is not right to descend on him in a troop and ask him to give them dinner.

I made up my mind that Madame Binetti had excited Branicki to follow me, and possibly to treat me as he had treated Tomatis. I had not received a blow certainly, but I had been called a coward. I had no choice but to demand satisfaction, but I also determined to be studiously moderate throughout. In this frame of mind I got down at the palatin's, resolved to tell the whole story to the king, leaving to his majesty the task of compelling his favourite to give me satisfaction.

As soon as the palatin saw me, he reproached me in a friendly manner for keeping him waiting, and we sat down to tressette. I was his partner, and committed several blunders. When it came to losing a second game he said,—

“Where is your head to-night?”

“My lord, it is four leagues away.”

“A respectable man ought to have his head in the game, and not at a distance of four leagues.”

With these words the prince threw down his cards and began to walk up and down the room. I was rather startled, but I got up and stood by the fire, waiting for the king. But after I had waited thus for half an hour a chamberlain came from the palace, and announced that his majesty could not do himself the honour of supping with my lord that night.

This was a blow for me, but I concealed my disappointment. Supper was served, and I sat down as usual at the left hand of the palatin, who was annoyed with me, and chewed it. We were eighteen at table, and for once I had no appetite. About the middle of the supper Prince Gaspard Lubomirski came in, and chanced to sit down opposite

me. As soon as he saw me he condoled with me in a loud voice for what had happened.

“I am sorry for you,” said he, “but Branicki was drunk, and you really shouldn’t count what he said as an insult.”

“What has happened?” became at once the general question. I held my tongue, and when they asked Lubomirski he replied that as I kept silence it was his duty to do the same.

Page 50

Thereupon the palatin, speaking in his friendliest manner, said to me,—

“What has taken place between you and Branicki?”

“I will tell you the whole story, my lord, in private after supper.”

The conversation became indifferent, and after the meal was over the palatin took up his stand by the small door by which he was accustomed to leave the room, and there I told him the whole story. He sighed, condoled with me, and added,—

“You had good reasons for being absent-minded at cards.”

“May I presume to ask your excellency’s advice?”

“I never give advice in these affairs, in which you must do every-thing or nothing.”

The palatin shook me by the hand, and I went home and slept for six hours. As soon as I awoke I sat up in bed, and my first thought was everything or nothing. I soon rejected the latter alternative, and I saw that I must demand a duel to the death. If Branicki refused to fight I should be compelled to kill him, even if I were to lose my head for it.

Such was my determination; to write to him proposing a duel at four leagues from Warsaw, this being the limit of the starostia, in which duelling was forbidden on pain of death. I wrote as follows, for I have kept the rough draft of the letter to this day:

“*Warsaw,*

“*March 5th, 1766. 5 A.M.*

“My Lord,—Yesterday evening your excellency insulted me with a light heart, without my having given you any cause or reason for doing so. This seems to indicate that you hate me, and would gladly efface me from the land of the living. I both can and will oblige you in this matter. Be kind enough, therefore, to drive me in your carriage to a place where my death will not subject your lordship to the vengeance of the law, in case you obtain the victory, and where I shall enjoy the same advantage if God give me grace to kill your lordship. I should not make this proposal unless I believe your lordship to be of a noble disposition.

“I have the honour to be, *etc.*”

I sent this letter an hour before day-break to Branicki’s lodging in the palace. My messenger had orders to give the letter into the count’s own hands, to wait for him to rise, and also for an answer.

In half an hour I received the following answer:



“Sir,—I accept your proposal, and shall be glad if you will have the kindness to inform me when I shall have the honour of seeing you.

“I remain, sir, *etc.*”

I answered this immediately, informing him I would call on him the next day, at six o'clock in the morning.

Shortly after, I received a second letter, in which he said that I might choose the arms and place, but that our differences must be settled in the course of the day.

I sent him the measure of my sword, which was thirty-two inches long, telling him he might choose any place beyond the ban. In reply, I had the following:

Page 51

"Sir,—You will greatly oblige me by coming now. I have sent my carriage.

"I have the honour to be, *etc.*"

I replied that I had business all the day, and that as I had made up my mind not to call upon him, except for the purpose of fighting, I begged him not to be offended if I took the liberty of sending back his carriage.

An hour later Branicki called in person, leaving his suite at the door. He came into the room, requested some gentlemen who were talking with me to leave us alone, locked the door after them, and then sat down on my bed. I did not understand what all this meant so I took up my pistols.

"Don't be afraid," said he, "I am not come to assassinate you, but merely to say that I accept your proposal, on condition only that the duel shall take place to-day. If not, never!"

"It is out of the question. I have letters to write, and some business to do for the king."

"That will do afterwards. In all probability you will not fall, and if you do I am sure the king will forgive you. Besides, a dead man need fear no reproaches."

"I want to make my will."

"Come, come, you needn't be afraid of dying; it will be time enough for you to make your will in fifty years."

"But why should your excellency not wait till tomorrow?"

"I don't want to be caught."

"You have nothing of the kind to fear from me."

"I daresay, but unless we make haste the king will have us both arrested."

"How can he, unless you have told him about our quarrel?"

"Ah, you don't understand! Well, I am quite willing to give you satisfaction, but it must be to-day or never."

"Very good. This duel is too dear to my heart for me to leave you any pretext for avoiding it. Call for me after dinner, for I shall want all my strength."

"Certainly. For my part I like a good supper after, better than a good dinner before."

"Everyone to his taste."

“True. By the way, why did you send me the length of your sword? I intend to fight with pistols, for I never use swords with unknown persons.”

“What do you mean? I beg of you to refrain from insulting me in my own house. I do not intend to fight with pistols, and you cannot compel me to do so, for I have your letter giving me the choice of weapons.”

“Strictly speaking, no doubt you are in the right; but I am sure you are too polite not to give way, when I assure you that you will lay me under a great obligation by doing so. Very often the first shot is a miss, and if that is the case with both of us, I promise to fight with swords as long as you like. Will you oblige me in the matter?”

“Yes, for I like your way of asking, though, in my opinion, a pistol duel is a barbarous affair. I accept, but on the following conditions: You must bring two pistols, charge them in my presence, and give me the choice. If the first shot is a miss, we will fight with swords till the first blood or to the death, whichever you prefer. Call for me at three o’clock, and choose some place where we shall be secure from the law.”

Page 52

“Very good. You are a good fellow, allow me to embrace you. Give me your word of honour not to say a word about it to anyone, for if you did we should be arrested immediately.”

“You need not be afraid of my talking; the project is too dear to me.”

“Good. Farewell till three o’clock.”

As soon as the brave braggart had left me, I placed the papers I was doing for the king apart, and went to Campioni, in whom I had great confidence.

“Take this packet to the king,” I said, “if I happen to be killed. You may guess, perhaps, what is going to happen, but do not say a word to anyone, or you will have me for your bitterest enemy, as it would mean loss of honour to me.”

“I understand. You may reckon on my discretion, and I hope the affair may be ended honourably and prosperously for you. But take a piece of friendly advice—don’t spare your opponent, were it the king himself, for it might cost you your life. I know that by experience.”

“I will not forget. Farewell.”

We kissed each other, and I ordered an excellent dinner, for I had no mind to be sent to Pluto fasting. Campioni came in to dinner at one o’clock, and at dessert I had a visit from two young counts, with their tutor, Bertrand, a kindly Swiss. They were witnesses to my cheerfulness and the excellent appetite with which I ate. At half-past two I dismissed my company, and stood at the window to be ready to go down directly Branicki’s carriage appeared. He drove up in a travelling carriage and six; two grooms, leading saddle-horses, went in front, followed by his two aide-de-camps and two hussars. Behind his carriage stood four servants. I hastened to descend, and found my enemy was accompanied by a lieutenant-general and an armed footman. The door was opened, the general gave me his place, and I ordered my servants not to follow me but to await my orders at the house.

“You might want them,” said Branicki; “they had better come along.”

“If I had as many as you, I would certainly agree to your proposition; but as it is I shall do still better without any at all. If need be, your excellency will see that I am tended by your own servants.”

He gave me his hand, and assured me they should wait on me before himself.

I sat down, and we went off.

It would have been absurd if I had asked where we were going, so I held my tongue, for at such moments a man should take heed to his words. Branicki was silent, and I thought the best thing I could do would be to engage him in a trivial conversation.

“Does your excellency intend spending the spring at Warsaw?”

“I had thought of doing so, but you may possibly send me to pass the spring somewhere else.”

“Oh, I hope not!”

“Have you seen any military service?”

“Yes; but may I ask why your excellency asks me the question, for—”

“I had no particular reason; it was only for the sake of saying something.”

Page 53

We had driven about half an hour when the carriage stopped at the door of a large garden. We got down and, following the postoli, reached a green arbour which, by the way, was not at all green on that 5th of March. In it was a stone table on which the footman placed two pistols, a foot and half long, with a powder flask and scales. He weighed the powder, loaded them equally, and laid them down crosswise on the table.

This done, Branicki said boldly,

“Choose your weapon, sir.”

At this the general called out,

“Is this a duel, sir?”

“Yes.”

“You cannot fight here; you are within the ban.”

“No matter.”

“It does matter; and I, at all events, refuse to be a witness. I am on guard at the castle, and you have taken me by surprise.”

“Be quiet; I will answer for everything. I owe this gentleman satisfaction, and I mean to give it him here.”

“M. Casanova,” said the general, “you cannot fight here.”

“Then why have I been brought here? I shall defend myself wherever I am attacked.”

“Lay the whole matter before the king, and you shall have my voice in your favour.”

“I am quite willing to do so, general, if his excellency will say that he regrets what passed between us last night.”

Branicki looked fiercely at me, and said wrathfully that he had come to fight and not to parley.

“General,” said I, “you can bear witness that I have done all in my power to avoid this duel.”

The general went away with his head between his hands, and throwing off my cloak I took the first pistol that came to my hand. Branicki took the other, and said that he would guarantee upon his honour that my weapon was a good one.

“I am going to try its goodness on your head,” I answered.



He turned pale at this, threw his sword to one of his servants, and bared his throat, and I was obliged, to my sorrow, to follow his example, for my sword was the only weapon I had, with the exception of the pistol. I bared my chest also, and stepped back five or six paces, and he did the same.

As soon as we had taken up our positions I took off my hat with my left hand, and begged him to fire first.

Instead of doing so immediately he lost two or three seconds in sighting, aiming, and covering his head by raising the weapon before it. I was not in a position to let him kill me at his ease, so I suddenly aimed and fired on him just as he fired on me. That I did so is evident, as all the witnesses were unanimous in saying that they only heard one report. I felt I was wounded in my left hand, and so put it into my pocket, and I ran towards my enemy who had fallen. All of a sudden, as I knelt beside him, three bare swords were flourished over my head, and three noble assassins prepared to cut me down beside their master. Fortunately, Branicki had not lost consciousness or the power of speaking, and he cried out in a voice of thunder,—

Page 54

“Scoundrels! have some respect for a man of honour.”

This seemed to petrify them. I put my right hand under the pistoli’s armpit, while the general helped him on the other side, and thus we took him to the inn, which happened to be near at hand.

Branicki stooped as he walked, and gazed at me curiously, apparently wondering where all the blood on my clothes came from.

When we got to the inn, Branicki laid himself down in an arm-chair. We unbuttoned his clothes and lifted up his shirt, and he could see himself that he was dangerously wounded. My ball had entered his body by the seventh rib on the right hand, and had gone out by the second false rib on the left. The two wounds were ten inches apart, and the case was of an alarming nature, as the intestines must have been pierced. Branicki spoke to me in a weak voice,—

“You have killed me, so make haste away, as you are in danger of the gibbet. The duel was fought in the ban, and I am a high court officer, and a Knight of the White Eagle. So lose no time, and if you have not enough money take my purse.”

I picked up the purse which had fallen out, and put it back in his pocket, thanking him, and saying it would be useless to me, for if I were guilty I was content to lose my head. “I hope,” I added, “that your wound will not be mortal, and I am deeply grieved at your obliging me to fight.”

With these words I kissed him on his brow and left the inn, seeing neither horses nor carriage, nor servant. They had all gone off for doctor, surgeon, priest, and the friends and relatives of the wounded man.

I was alone and without any weapon, in the midst of a snow-covered country, my hand was wounded, and I had not the slightest idea which was the way to Warsaw.

I took the road which seemed most likely, and after I had gone some distance I met a peasant with an empty sleigh.

“Warszawa?” I cried, shewing him a ducat.

He understood me, and lifted a coarse mat, with which he covered me when I got into the sleigh, and then set off at a gallop.

All at once Biniski, Branicki’s bosom-friend, came galloping furiously along the road with his bare sword in his hand. He was evidently running after me. Happily he did not glance at the wretched sleigh in which I was, or else he would undoubtedly have murdered me. I got at last to Warsaw, and went to the house of Prince Adam

Czartoryski to beg him to shelter me, but there was nobody there. Without delay I determined to seek refuge in the Convent of the Recollets, which was handy.

Page 55

I rang at the door of the monastery, and the porter seeing me covered with blood hastened to shut the door, guessing the object of my visit. But I did not give him the time to do so, but honouring him with a hearty kick forced my way in. His cries attracted a troop of frightened monks. I demanded sanctuary, and threatened them with vengeance if they refused to grant it. One of their number spoke to me, and I was taken to a little den which looked more like a dungeon than anything else. I offered no resistance, feeling sure that they would change their tune before very long. I asked them to send for my servants, and when they came I sent for a doctor and Campioni. Before the surgeon could come the Palatin of Polduchia was announced. I had never had the honour of speaking to him, but after hearing the history of my duel he was so kind as to give me all the particulars of a duel he had fought in his youthful days. Soon after came the Palatin of Kalisch, Prince Jablenowski. Prince Sanguska, and the Palatin of Wilna, who all joined in a chorus of abuse of the monks who had lodged me so scurvily. The poor religious excused themselves by saying that I had ill-treated their porter, which made my noble friends laugh; but I did not laugh, for my wound was very painful. However I was immediately moved into two of their best guest-rooms.

The ball had pierced my hand by the metacarpus under the index finger, and had broken the first phalanges. Its force had been arrested by a metal button on my waistcoat, and it had only inflicted a slight wound on my stomach close to the navel. However, there it was and it had to be extracted, for it pained me extremely. An empiric named Gendron, the first surgeon my servants had found, made an opening on the opposite side of my hand which doubled the wound. While he was performing this painful operation I told the story of the duel to the company, concealing the anguish I was enduring. What a power vanity exercises on the moral and physical forces! If I had been alone I should probably have fainted.

As soon as the empiric Gendron was gone, the palatin's surgeon came in and took charge of the case, calling Gendron a low fellow. At the same time Prince Lubomirski, the husband of the palatin's daughter, arrived, and gave us all a surprise by recounting the strange occurrences which had happened after the duel. Bininski came to where Branicki was lying, and seeing his wound rode off furiously on horseback, swearing to strike me dead wherever he found me. He fancied I would be with Tomatis, and went to his house. He found Tomatis with his mistress, Prince Lubomirski, and Count Moszczinski, but no Casanova was visible. He asked where I was, and on Tomatis replying that he did not know he discharged a pistol at his head. At this dastardly action Count Moszczincki seized him and tried to throw him out of the window, but the madman got loose with three cuts of his sabre, one of which slashed the count on the face and knocked out three of his teeth.

Page 56

"After this exploit," Prince Lubomirski continued, "he seized me by the throat and held a pistol to my head, threatening to blow out my brains if I did not take him in safety to the court where his horse was, so that he might get away from the house without any attack being made on him by Tomatis's servants; and I did so immediately. Moszczinski is in the doctor's hands, and will be laid up for some time.

"As soon as it was reported that Branicki was killed, his Uhlans began to ride about the town swearing to avenge their colonel, and to slaughter you. It is very fortunate that you took refuge here.

"The chief marshal has had the monastery surrounded by two hundred dragoons, ostensibly to prevent your escape, but in reality to defend you from Branicki's soldiers.

"The doctors say that the postoli is in great danger if the ball has wounded the intestines, but if not they answer for his recovery. His fate will be known tomorrow. He now lies at the lord chamberlain's, not daring to have himself carried to his apartments at the palace. The king has been to see him, and the general who was present told his majesty that the only thing that saved your life was your threat to aim at Branicki's head. This frightened him, and to keep your ball from his head he stood in such an awkward position that he missed your vital parts. Otherwise he would undoubtedly have shot you through the heart, for he can split a bullet into two halves by firing against the blade of a knife. It was also a lucky thing for you that you escaped Bininski, who never thought of looking for you in the wretched sleigh."

"My lord, the most fortunate thing for me is that I did not kill my man outright. Otherwise I should have been cut to pieces just as I went to his help by three of his servants, who stood over me with drawn swords. However, the postoli ordered them to leave me alone.

"I am sorry for what has happened to your highness and Count Moszczinski; and if Tomatis was not killed by the madman it is only because the pistol was only charged with powder."

"That's what I think, for no one heard the bullet; but it was a mere chance."

"Quite so."

Just then an officer of the palatin's came to me with a note from his master, which ran as follows:

"Read what the king says to me, and sleep well."

The king's note was thus conceived:



“Branicki, my dear uncle, is dangerous wounded. My surgeons are doing all they can for him, but I have not forgotten Casanova. You may assure him that he is pardoned, even if Branicki should die.”

I kissed the letter gratefully, and shewed it to my visitors, who lauded this generous man truly worthy of being a king.

After this pleasant news I felt in need of rest, and my lords left me. As soon as they were gone, Campioni, who had come in before and had stood in the background, came up to me and gave me back the packet of papers, and with tears of joy congratulated me on the happy issue of the duel.

Page 57

Next day I had shoals of visitors, and many of the chiefs of the party opposed to Branicki sent me purses full of gold. The persons who brought the money on behalf of such a lord or lady, said that being a foreigner I might be in need of money, and that was their excuse for the liberty they had taken. I thanked and refused them all, and sent back at least four thousand ducats, and was very proud of having done so. Campioni thought it was absurd, and he was right, for I repented afterwards of what I had done. The only present I accepted was a dinner for four persons, which Prince Adam Czartoryski sent me in every day, though the doctor would not let me enjoy it, he being a great believer in diet.

The wound in my stomach was progressing favourably, but on the fourth day the surgeons said my hand was becoming gangrened, and they agreed that the only remedy was amputation. I saw this announced in the Court Gazette the next morning, but as I had other views on the matter I laughed heartily at the paragraph. The sheet was printed at night, after the king had placed his initials to the copy. In the morning several persons came to condole with me, but I received their sympathy with great irreverence. I merely laughed at Count Clary, who said I would surely submit to the operation; and just as he uttered the words the three surgeons came in together.

"Well, gentlemen," said I, "you have mustered in great strength; why is this?"

My ordinary surgeon replied that he wished to have the opinion of the other two before proceeding to amputation, and they would require to look at the wound.

The dressing was lifted and gangrene was declared to be undoubtedly present, and execution was ordered that evening. The butchers gave me the news with radiant faces, and assured me I need not be afraid as the operation would certainly prove efficacious.

"Gentlemen," I replied, "you seem to have a great many solid scientific reasons for cutting off my hand; but one thing you have not got, and that is my consent. My hand is my own, and I am going to keep it."

"Sir, it is certainly gangrened; by to-morrow the arm will begin to mortify, and then you will have to lose your arm."

"Very good; if that prove so you shall cut off my arm, but I happen to know something of gangrene, and there is none about me."

"You cannot know as much about it as we do."

"Possibly; but as far as I can make out, you know nothing at all."

"That's rather a strong expression."

“I don’t care whether it be strong or weak; you can go now.”

In a couple of hours everyone whom the surgeons had told of my obstinacy came pestering me. Even the prince-palatine wrote to me that the king was extremely surprised at my lack of courage. This stung me to the quick, and I wrote the king a long letter, half in earnest and half in jest, in which I laughed at the ignorance of the surgeons, and at the simplicity of those who took whatever they said for gospel truth. I added that as an arm without a hand would be quite as useless as no arm at all, I meant to wait till it was necessary to cut off the arm.

Page 58

My letter was read at Court, and people wondered how a man with gangrene could write a long letter of four pages. Lubomirski told me kindly that I was mistaken in laughing at my friends, for the three best surgeons in Warsaw could not be mistaken in such a simple case.

“My lord, they are not deceived themselves, but they want to deceive me.”

“Why should they?”

“To make themselves agreeable to Branicki, who is in a dangerous state, and might possibly get better if he heard that my hand had been taken off.”

“Really that seems an incredible idea to me!”

“What will your highness say on the day when I am proved to be right?”

“I shall say you are deserving of the highest praise, but the day must first come.”

“We shall see this evening, and I give you my word that if any gangrene has attacked the arm, I will have it cut off to-morrow morning.”

Four surgeons came to see me. My arm was pronounced to be highly aedematous, and of a livid colour up to the elbow; but when the lint was taken off the wound I could see for myself that it was progressing admirably. However, I concealed my delight. Prince Augustus Sulkowski and the Abbe Gouvel were present; the latter being attached to the palatin’s court. The judgment of the surgeons was that the arm was gangrened, and must be amputated by the next morning at latest.

I was tired of arguing with these rascals, so I told them to bring their instruments, and that I would submit to the operation. At this they went away in high glee, to tell the news at the Court, to Branicki, to the palatin, and so forth. I merely gave my servants orders to send them away when they came.

I can dwell no more on this matter, though it is interesting enough to me. However, the reader will no doubt be obliged to me by my simply saying that a French surgeon in Prince Sulkowski’s household took charge of the case in defiance of professional etiquette, and cured me perfectly, so I have my hand and my arm to this day.

On Easter Day I went to mass with my arm in a sling. My cure had only lasted three weeks, but I was not able to put the hand to any active employment for eighteen months afterwards. Everyone was obliged to congratulate me on having held out against the amputation, and the general consent declared the surgeons grossly ignorant, while I was satisfied with thinking them very great knaves.

I must here set down an incident which happened three days after the duel.

I was told that a Jesuit father from the bishop of the diocese wanted to speak to me in private, and I had him shewn in, and asked him what he wanted.

“I have come from my lord-bishop,” said he, “to absolve you from the ecclesiastical censure, which you have incurred by duelling.”

“I am always delighted to receive absolution, father, but only after I have confessed my guilt. In the present case I have nothing to confess; I was attacked, and I defended myself. Pray thank my lord for his kindness. If you like to absolve me without confession, I shall be much obliged.”

Page 59

"If you do not confess, I cannot give you absolution, but you can do this: ask me to absolve you, supposing you have fought a duel."

"Certainly; I shall be glad if you will absolve me, supposing I have fought a duel."

The delightful Jesuit gave me absolution in similar terms. He was like his brethren—never at a loss when a loophole of any kind is required.

Three days before I left the monastery, that is on Holy Thursday, the marshal withdrew my guard. After I had been to mass on Easter Day, I went to Court, and as I kissed the king's hand, he asked me (as had been arranged) why I wore my arm in a sling. I said I had been suffering from a rheum, and he replied, with a meaning smile,—

"Take care not to catch another."

After my visit to the king, I called on Branicki, who had made daily enquiries after my health, and had sent me back my sword. He was condemned to stay in bed for six weeks longer at least, for the wad of my pistol had got into the wound, and in extracting it the opening had to be enlarged, which retarded his recovery. The king had just appointed him chief huntsman, not so exalted an office as chamberlain, but a more lucrative one. It was said he had got the place because he was such a good shot; but if that were the reason I had a better claim to it, for I had proved the better shot—for one day at all events.

I entered an enormous ante-room in which stood officers, footmen, pages, and lacqueys, all gazing at me with the greatest astonishment. I asked if my lord was to be seen, and begged the door-keeper to send in my name. He did not answer, but sighed, and went into his master's room. Directly after, he came out and begged me, with a profound bow, to step in.

Branicki, who was dressed in a magnificent gown and supported by pillows and cushions, greeted me by taking off his nightcap. He was as pale as death.

"I have come here, my lord," I began, "to offer you my service, and to assure you how I regret that I did not pass over a few trifling words of yours."

"You have no reason to reproach yourself, M. Casanova."

"Your excellency is very kind. I am also come to say that by fighting with me you have done me an honour which completely swallows up all offence, and I trust that you will give me your protection for the future."

"I confess I insulted you, but you will allow that I have paid for it. As to my friends, I openly say that they are my enemies unless they treat you with respect. Bininski has been cashiered, and his nobility taken from him; he is well served. As to my protection

you have no need of it, the king esteems you highly, like myself, and all men of honour. Sit down; we will be friends. A cup of chocolate for this gentleman. You seem to have got over your wound completely."

"Quite so, my lord, except as to the use of my fingers, and that will take some time."

Page 60

"You were quite right to withstand those rascally surgeons, and you had good reason for your opinion that the fools thought to please me by rendering you one-handed. They judged my heart by their own. I congratulate you on the preservation of your hand, but I have not been able to make out how my ball could have wounded you in the hand after striking your stomach."

Just then the chocolate was brought, and the chamberlain came in and looked at me with a smile. In five minutes the room was full of lords and ladies who had heard I was with Branicki, and wanted to know how we were getting on. I could see that they did not expect to find us on such good terms, and were agreeably surprised. Branicki asked the question which had been interrupted by the chocolate and the visitors over again.

"Your excellency will allow me to assume the position I was in as I received your fire."

"Pray do so."

I rose and placed myself in the position, and he said he understood how it was.

A lady said,—

"You should have put your hand behind your body."

"Excuse me, madam, but I thought it better to put my body behind my hand."

This sally made Branicki laugh, but his sister said to me,—

"You wanted to kill my brother, for you aimed at his head."

"God forbid, madam! my interest lay in keeping him alive to defend me from his friends."

"But you said you were going to fire at his head."

"That's a mere figure of speech, just as one says, 'I'll blow your brains out.' The skilled duellist, however, always aims at the middle of the body; the head does not offer a large enough surface."

"Yes," said Branicki, "your tactics were superior to mine, and I am obliged to you for the lesson you gave me."

"Your excellency gave me a lesson in heroism of far greater value."

"You must have had a great deal of practice with the pistol," continued his sister.

"Not at all, madam, I regard the weapon with detestation. This unlucky shot was my first; but I have always known a straight line, and my hand has always been steady."

“That’s all one wants,” said Branicki. “I have those advantages myself, and I am only too well pleased that I did not aim so well as usual.”

“Your ball broke my first phalanges. Here it is you see, flattened by my bone. Allow me to return it to you.”

“I am sorry to say I can’t return yours, which I suppose remains on the field of battle.”

“You seem to be getting better, thank God!”

“The wound is healing painfully. If I had imitated you I should no longer be in the land of the living; I am told you made an excellent dinner?”

“Yes, my lord, I was afraid I might never have another chance of dining again.”

“If I had dined, your ball would have pierced my intestines; but being empty it yielded to the bullet, and let it pass by harmlessly.”

Page 61

I heard afterwards that on the day of the duel Branicki had gone to confession and mass, and had communicated. The priest could not refuse him absolution, if he said that honour obliged him to fight; for this was in accordance with the ancient laws of chivalry. As for me I only addressed these words to God:

“Lord, if my enemy kill me, I shall be damned; deign, therefore, to preserve me from death. Amen.”

After a long and pleasant conversation I took leave of the hero to visit the high constable, Count Bielinski, brother of Countess Salmor. He was a very old man, but the sovereign administrator of justice in Poland. I had never spoken to him, but he had defended me from Branicki's Uhlans, and had made out my pardon, so I felt bound to go and thank him.

I sent in my name, and the worthy old man greeted me with:

“What can I do for you?”

“I have come to kiss the hand of the kindly man that signed my pardon, and to promise your excellency to be more discreet in future.”

“I advise you to be more discreet indeed. As for your pardon, thank the king; for if he had not requested me especially to grant it you, I should have had you beheaded.”

“In spite of the extenuating circumstances, my lord?”

“What circumstances? Did you or did you not fight a duel.”

“That is not a proper way of putting it; I was obliged to defend myself. You might have charged me with fighting a duel if Branicki had taken me outside the ban, as I requested, but as it was he took me where he willed and made me fight. Under these circumstances I am sure your excellency would have spared my head.”

“I really can't say. The king requested that you should be pardoned, and that shews he believes you to be deserving of pardon; I congratulate you on his good will. I shall be pleased if you will dine with me tomorrow.”

“My lord, I am delighted to accept your invitation.”

The illustrious old constable was a man of great intelligence. He had been a bosom-friend of the celebrated Poniatowski, the king's father. We had a good deal of conversation together at dinner the next day.

“What a comfort it would have been to your excellency's friend,” said I, “if he could have lived to see his son crowned King of Poland.”

“He would never have consented.”

The vehemence with which he pronounced these words gave me a deep insight into his feelings. He was of the Saxon party. The same day, that is on Easter Day, I dined at the palatin’s.

“Political reasons,” said he, “prevented me from visiting you at the monastery; but you must not think I had forgotten you, for you were constantly in my thoughts. I am going to lodge you here, for my wife is very fond of your society; but the rooms will not be ready for another six weeks.”

“I shall take the opportunity, my lord, of paying a visit to the Palatin of Kiowia, who has honoured me with an invitation to come and see him.”

Page 62

"Who gave you the invitation?"

"Count Bruhl, who is at Dresden; his wife is daughter of the palatin."

"This journey is an excellent idea, for this duel of yours has made you innumerable enemies, and I only hope you will have to fight no more duels. I give you fair warning; be on your guard, and never go on foot, especially at night."

I spent a fortnight in going out to dinner and supper every day. I had become the fashion, and wherever I went I had to tell the duel story over again. I was rather tired of it myself, but the wish to please and my own self-love were too strong to be resisted. The king was nearly always present, but feigned not to hear me. However, he once asked me if I had been insulted by a patrician in Venice, whether I should have called him out immediately.

"No, sire, for his patrician pride would have prevented his complying, and I should have had my pains for my trouble."

"Then what would you have done?"

"Sire, I should have contained myself, though if a noble Venetian were to insult me in a foreign country he would have to give me satisfaction."

I called on Prince Moszczinski, and Madame Binetti happened to be there; the moment she saw me she made her escape.

"What has she against me?" I asked the count.

"She is afraid of you, because she was the cause of the duel, and now Branicki who was her lover will have nothing more to say to her. She hoped he would serve you as he served Tomatis, and instead of that you almost killed her bravo. She lays the fault on him for having accepted your challenge, but he has resolved to have done with her."

This Count Moszczinski was both good-hearted and quick-witted, and so, generous that he ruined himself by making presents. His wounds were beginning to heal, but though I was the indirect cause of his mishap, far from bearing malice against me he had become my friend.

The person whom I should have expected to be most grateful to me for the duel was Tomatis, but on the contrary he hated the sight of me and hardly concealed his feelings. I was the living reproach of his cowardice; my wounded hand seemed to shew him that he had loved his money more than his honour. I am sure he would have preferred Branicki to have killed me, for then he would have become an object of general execration, and Tomatis would have been received with less contempt in the great houses he still frequented.

I resolved to pay a visit to the discontented party who had only recognized the new king on compulsion, and some of whom had not recognized him at all; so I set out with my true friend Campioni and one servant.

Page 63

Prince Charles of Courland had started for Venice, where I had given him letters for my illustrious friends who would make his visit a pleasant one. The English ambassador who had given me an introduction to Prince Adam had just arrived at Warsaw. I dined with him at the prince's house, and the king signified his wish to be of the party. I heard a good deal of conversation about Madame de Geoffrin, an old sweetheart of the king's whom he had just summoned to Warsaw. The Polish monarch, of whom I cannot speak in too favourable terms, was yet weak enough to listen to the slanderous reports against me, and refused to make my fortune. I had the pleasure of convincing him that he was mistaken, but I will speak of this later on.

I arrived at Leopold the sixth day after I had left Warsaw, having stopped a couple of days at Prince Zamoiski's; he had forty thousand ducats a-year, but also the falling sickness.

"I would give all my goods," said he, "to be cured."

I pitied his young wife. She was very fond of him, and yet had to deny him, for his disease always came on him in moments of amorous excitement. She had the bitter task of constantly refusing him, and even of running away if he pressed her hard. This great nobleman, who died soon after, lodged me in a splendid room utterly devoid of furniture. This is the Polish custom; one is supposed to bring one's furniture with one.

At Leopold I put up, at an hotel, but I soon had to move from thence to take up my abode with the famous Kaminska, the deadly foe of Branicki, the king, and all that party. She was very rich, but she has since been ruined by conspiracies. She entertained me sumptuously for a week, but the visit was agreeable to neither side, as she could only speak Polish and German. From Leopold I proceeded to a small town, the name of which I forget (the Polish names are very crabbed) to take an introduction from Prince Lubomirski to Joseph Rzewuski, a little old man who wore a long beard as a sign of mourning for the innovations that were being introduced into his country. He was rich, learned, superstitiously religious, and polite exceedingly. I stayed with him for three days. He was the commander of a stronghold containing a garrison of five hundred men.

On the first day, as I was in his room with some other officers, about eleven o'clock in the morning, another officer came in, whispered to Rzewuski, and then came up to me and whispered in my ear, "Venice and St. Mark."

"St. Mark," I answered aloud, "is the patron saint and protector of Venice," and everybody began to laugh.

It dawned upon me that "Venice and St. Mark" was the watchword, and I began to apologize profusely, and the word was changed.

The old commander spoke to me with great politeness. He never went to Court, but he had resolved on going to the Diet to oppose the Russian party with all his might. The poor man, a Pole of the true old leaven, was one of the four whom Repnin arrested and sent to Siberia.

Page 64

After taking leave of this brave patriot, I went to Christianopol, where lived the famous palatin Potocki, who had been one of the lovers of the empress Anna Ivanovna. He had founded the town in which he lived and called it after his own name. This nobleman, still a fine man, kept a splendid court. He honoured Count Bruhl by keeping me at his house for a fortnight, and sending me out every day with his doctor, the famous Styrneus, the sworn foe of Van Swieten, a still more famous physician. Although Styrneus was undoubtedly a learned man, I thought him somewhat extravagant and empirical. His system was that of Asclepiades, considered as exploded since the time of the great Boerhaave; nevertheless, he effected wonderful cures.

In the evenings I was always with the palatin and his court. Play was not heavy, and I always won, which was fortunate and indeed necessary for me. After an extremely agreeable visit to the palatin I returned to Leopold, where I amused myself for a week with a pretty girl who afterwards so captivated Count Potocki, starost of Sniatin, that he married her. This is purity of blood with a vengeance in your noble families!

Leaving Leopold I went to Palavia, a splendid palace on the Vistula, eighteen leagues distant from Warsaw. It belonged to the prince palatin, who had built it himself.

Howsoever magnificent an abode may be, a lonely man will weary of it unless he has the solace of books or of some great idea. I had neither, and boredom soon made itself felt.

A pretty peasant girl came into my room, and finding her to my taste I tried to make her understand me without the use of speech, but she resisted and shouted so loudly that the door-keeper came up, and asked me, coolly,—

“If you like the girl, why don’t you go the proper way to work?”

“What way is that?”

“Speak to her father, who is at hand, and arrange the matter amicably.”

“I don’t know Polish. Will you carry the thing through?”

“Certainly. I suppose you will give fifty florins?”

“You are laughing at me. I will give a hundred willingly, provided she is a maid and is as submissive as a lamb.”

No doubt the arrangement was made without difficulty, for our hymen took place the same evening, but no sooner was the operation completed than the poor lamb fled away in hot haste, which made me suspect that her father had used rather forcible persuasion with her. I would not have allowed this had I been aware of it.

The next morning several girls were offered to me, but the faces of all of them were covered.

“Where is the girl?” said I. “I want to see her face.”

“Never mind about the face, if the rest is all right.”

“The face is the essential part for me,” I replied, “and the rest I look upon as an accessory.”

He did not understand this. However, they were uncovered, but none of their faces excited my desires.

Page 65

As a rule, the Polish women are ugly; a beauty is a miracle, and a pretty woman a rare exception. At the end of a week of feasting and weariness, I returned to Warsaw.

In this manner I saw Podolia and Volkynia, which were rebaptized a few years later by the names of Galicia and Lodomeria, for they are now part of the Austrian Empire. It is said, however, that they are more prosperous than they ever were before.

At Warsaw I found Madame Geoffrin the object of universal admiration; and everybody was remarking with what simplicity she was dressed. As for myself, I was received not coldly, but positively rudely. People said to my face,—

“We did not expect to see you here again. Why did you come back?”

“To pay my debts.”

This behaviour astonished and disgusted me. The prince-palatin even seemed quite changed towards me. I was still invited to dinner, but no one spoke to me. However, Prince Adam’s sister asked me very kindly to come and sup with her, and I accepted the invitation with delight. I found myself seated opposite the king, who did not speak one word to me the whole time. He had never behaved to me thus before.

The next day I dined with the Countess Oginski, and in the course of dinner the countess asked where the king had supper the night before; nobody seemed to know, and I did not answer. Just as we were rising, General Roniker came in, and the question was repeated.

“At Princess Strasnikowa’s,” said the general, “and M. Casanova was there.”

“Then why did you not answer my question?” said the countess to me.

“Because I am very sorry to have been there. His majesty neither spoke to me nor looked at me. I see I am in disgrace, but for the life of me I know not why.”

On leaving the house I went to call on Prince Augustus Sulkowski, who welcomed me as of old, but told me that I had made a mistake in returning to Warsaw as public opinion was against me.

“What have I done?”

“Nothing; but the Poles are always inconstant and changeable. ‘Sarmatarum virtus veluti extra ipsos’. This inconstancy will cost us dear sooner or later. Your fortune was made, but you missed the turn of the tide, and I advise you to go.”

“I will certainly do so, but it seems to me rather hard.”

When I got home my servant gave me a letter which some unknown person had left at my door. I opened it and found it to be anonymous, but I could see it came from a well-wisher. The writer said that the slanderers had got the ears of the king, and that I was no longer a persona grata at Court, as he had been assured that the Parisians had burnt me in effigy for my absconding with the lottery money, and that I had been a strolling player in Italy and little better than a vagabond.

Such calumnies are easy to utter but hard to refute in a foreign country. At all Courts hatred, born of envy, is ever at work. I might have despised the slanders and left the country, but I had contracted debts and had not sufficient money to pay them and my expenses to Portugal, where I thought I might do something.

Page 66

I no longer saw any company, with the exception of Campioni, who seemed more distressed than myself. I wrote to Venice and everywhere else, where there was a chance of my getting funds; but one day the general, who had been present at the duel, called on me, and told me (though he seemed ashamed of his task) that the king requested me to leave the ban in the course of a week.

Such a piece of insolence made my blood boil, and I informed the general that he might tell the king that I did not feel inclined to obey such an unjust order, and that if I left I would let all the world know that I had been compelled to do so by brute force.

"I cannot take such a message as that," said the general, kindly. "I shall simply tell the king that I have executed his orders, and no more; but of course you must follow your own judgment."

In the excess of my indignation I wrote to the king that I could not obey his orders and keep my honour. I said in my letter,—

"My creditors, sire, will forgive me for leaving Poland without paying my debts, when they learn that I have only done so because your majesty gave me no choice."

I was thinking how I could ensure this letter reaching the king, when who should arrive but Count Moszczinski. I told him what had happened, and asked if he could suggest any means of delivering tire letter. "Give it to me," said he; "I will place it in the king's hands."

As soon as he had gone I went out to take the air, and called on Prince Sulkowski, who was not at all astonished at my news. As if to sweeten the bitter pill I had to swallow, he told me how the Empress of Austria had ordered him to leave Vienna in twenty-four hours, merely because he had complimented the Archduchess Christina on behalf of Prince Louis of Wurtemberg.

The next day Count Moszczinski brought me a present of a thousand ducats from the king, who said that my leaving Warsaw would probably be the means of preserving my life, as in that city I was exposed to danger which I could not expect to escape eventually.

This referred to five or six challenges I had received, and to which I had not even taken the trouble to reply. My enemies might possibly assassinate me, and the king did not care to be constantly anxious on my account. Count Moszczinski added that the order to leave carried no dishonour with it, considering by whom it had been delivered, and the delay it gave me to make my preparations.

The consequence of all this was that I not only gave my word to go, but that I begged the count to thank his majesty for his kindness, and the interest he had been pleased to take in me.

Page 67

When I gave in, the generous Moszczinski embraced me, begged me to write to him, and accept a present of a travelling carriage as a token of his friendship. He informed me that Madame Binetti's husband had gone off with his wife's maid, taking with him her diamonds, jewels, linen, and even her silver plate, leaving her to the tender mercies of the dancer, Pic. Her admirers had clubbed together to make up to her for what her husband had stolen. I also heard that the king's sister had arrived at Warsaw from Bialistock, and it was hoped that her husband would follow her. This husband was the real Count Branicki, and the Branicki, or rather Branecki, or Bragnecki, who had fought with me, was no relation to him whatever.

The following day I paid my debts, which amounted to about two hundred ducats, and I made preparations for starting for Breslau, the day after, with Count Clary, each of us having his own carriage. Clary was one of those men to whom lying has become a sort of second nature; whenever such an one opens his mouth, you may safely say to him, "You have lied, or you are going to lie." If they could feel their own degradation, they would be much to be pitied, for by their own fault at last no one will believe them even when by chance they speak the truth. This Count Clary, who was not one of the Clarys of Teplitz, could neither go to his own country nor to Vienna, because he had deserted the army on the eve of a battle. He was lame, but he walked so adroitly that his defect did not appear. If this had been the only truth he concealed, it would have been well, for it was a piece of deception that hurt no one. He died miserably in Venice.

We reached Breslau in perfect safety, and without experiencing any adventures. Campioni, who had accompanied me as far as Wurtemberg, returned, but rejoined me at Vienna in the course of seven months. Count Clary had left Breslau, and I thought I would make the acquaintance of the Abbe Bastiani, a celebrated Venetian, whose fortune had been made by the King of Prussia. He was canon of the cathedral, and received me cordially; in fact, each mutually desired the other's acquaintance. He was a fine well-made man, fair-complexioned, and at least six feet high. He was also witty, learned, eloquent, and gifted with a persuasive voice; his cook was an artist, his library full of choice volumes, and his cellar a very good one. He was well lodged on the ground floor, and on the first floor he accommodated a lady, of whose children he was very fond, possibly because he was their father. Although a great admirer of the fair sex, his tastes were by no means exclusive, and he did not despise love of the Greek or philosophic kind. I could see that he entertained a passion for a young priest whom I met at his table. This young abbe was Count di Cavalcano and Bastiani seemed to adore him, if fiery glances signified anything; but the innocent young man did not seem to understand,

Page 68

and I suppose Bastiani did not like to lower his dignity by declaring his love. The canon shewed me all the letters he had received from the King of Prussia before he had been made canon. He was the son of a tailor at Venice, and became a friar, but having committed some peccadillo which got him into trouble, he was fortunate enough to be able to make his escape. He fled to The Hague, and there met Tron, the Venetian ambassador, who lent him a hundred ducats with which he made his way to Berlin and favour with the king. Such are the ways by which men arrive at fortune! 'Sequere deum'!

On the event of my departure from Breslau I went to pay a call on a baroness for whom I had a letter of introduction from her son, who was an officer of the Polish Court. I sent up my name and was asked to wait a few moments, as the baroness was dressing. I sat down beside a pretty girl, who was neatly dressed in a mantle with a hood. I asked her if she were waiting for the baroness like myself.

"Yes, sir," she replied, "I have come to offer myself as governess for her three daughters."

"What! Governess at your age?"

"Alas! sir, age has nothing to do with necessity. I have neither father nor mother. My brother is a poor lieutenant who cannot help me; what can I do? I can only get a livelihood by turning my good education to account."

"What will your salary be?"

"Fifty wretched crowns, enough to buy my dresses."

"It's very little."

"It is as much as people give."

"Where are you living now?"

"With a poor aunt, where I can scarce earn enough bread to keep me alive by sewing from morning till night."

"If you liked to become my governess instead of becoming a children's governess, I would give you fifty crowns, not per year, but per month."

"Your governess? Governess to your family, you mean, I suppose?"

"I have no family; I am a bachelor, and I spend my time in travelling. I leave at five o'clock to-morrow morning for Dresden, and if you like to come with me there is a place for you in my carriage. I am staying at such an inn. Come there with your trunk, and we will start together."

"You are joking; besides, I don't know you."

"I am not jesting; and we should get to know each other perfectly well in twenty-four hours; that is ample time."

My serious air convinced the girl that I was not laughing at her; but she was still very much astonished, while I was very much astonished to find I had gone so far when I had only intended to joke. In trying to win over the girl I had won over myself. It seemed to me a rare adventure, and I was delighted to see that she was giving it her serious attention by the side-glances she kept casting in my direction to see if I was laughing at her. I began to think that fate had brought us together that I might become the architect of her fortune. I had no doubt whatever as to her goodness or her feelings for me, for she completely infatuated my judgment. To put the finishing stroke on the affair I drew out two ducats and gave them her as an earnest of her first month's wages. She took them timidly, but seemed convinced that I was not imposing on her.

Page 69

By this time the baroness was ready, and she welcomed me very kindly; but I said I could not accept her invitation to dine with her the following day, as I was leaving at day-break. I replied to all the questions that a fond mother makes concerning her son, and then took leave of the worthy lady. As I went out I noticed that the would-be governess had disappeared. The rest of the day I spent with the canon, making good cheer, playing ombre, drinking hard, and talking about girls or literature. The next day my carriage came to the door at the time I had arranged, and I went off without thinking of the girl I had met at the baroness's. But we had not gone two hundred paces when the postillion stopped, a bundle of linen whirled through the window into the carriage, and the governess got in. I gave her a hearty welcome by embracing her, and made her sit down beside me, and so we drove off.

In the ensuing chapter the reader will become more fully acquainted with my fresh conquest. In the meantime let him imagine me rolling peacefully along the Dresden road.

CHAPTER XXIII

My Arrival at Dresden with Maton—She Makes Me a Present—Leipzig—Castelbajac—Schwerin—Return to Dresden and Departure—I Arrive at Vienna—Pocchini's Vengeance

When I saw myself in the carriage with this pretty girl, who had fallen on me as if from the clouds, I imagined I was intended to shape her destiny. Her tutelary genius must have placed her in my hands, for I felt inclined to do her all the good that lay in my power. But for myself; was it a piece of good or ill luck for me? I formed the question, but felt that time alone could give the answer. I knew that I was still living in my old style, while I was beginning to feel that I was no longer a young man.

I was sure that my new companion could not have abandoned herself to me in this manner, without having made up her mind to be complaisant; but this was not enough for me, it was my humour to be loved. This was my chief aim, everything else was only fleeting enjoyment, and as I had not had a love affair since I parted with Zaira, I hoped most fervently that the present adventure would prove to be one.

Before long I learnt that my companion's name was Maton; this at least was her surname, and I did not feel any curiosity to know the name of the he or she saint whom her godmothers had constituted her patron at the baptismal font. I asked her if she could write French as well as she spoke it, and she shewed me a letter by way of sample. It assured me that she had received an excellent education, and this fact increased my pleasure in the conquest I had made. She said she had left Breslau without telling her aunt or her cousin that she was going, perhaps never to return.

“How about your belongings?”

“Belongings? They were not worth the trouble of gathering together. All I have is included in that small package, which contains a chemise, a pair of stockings, some handkerchiefs, and a few nicknacks.”

Page 70

“What will your lover say?”

“Alas! I haven’t got one to say anything.”

“I cannot credit that.”

“I have had two lovers; the first one was a rascal, who took advantage of my innocence to seduce me, and then left me when I ceased to present any novelty for him; my second was an honest man, but a poor lieutenant with no prospects of getting on. He has not abandoned me, but his regiment was ordered to Stetin, and since then—”

“And since then?”

“We were too poor to write to one another, so we had to suffer in silence.”

This pathetic history seemed to bear the marks of truth; and I thought it very possible that Maton had only come with me to make her fortune or to do rather better than she had been doing, which would not be difficult. She was twenty-five years old, and as she had never been out of Breslau before, she would doubtless be delighted to see what the world was like at Dresden. I could not help feeling that I had been a fool to burden myself with the girl, who would most likely cost me a lot of money; but still I found my conduct excusable, as the chances were a hundred to one against her accepting the proposal I had been foolish enough to make. In short, I resolved to enjoy the pleasure of having a pretty girl all to myself, and I determined not to do anything during the journey, being anxious to see whether her moral qualities would plead as strongly with me as her physical beauty undoubtedly did. At nightfall I stopped, wishing to spend the night at the posting-station. Maton, who had been very hungry all day, but had not dared to tell me so, ate with an amazing and pleasing appetite; but not being accustomed to wine, she would have fallen asleep at table, if I had not begged her to retire. She begged my pardon, assuring me she would not let such a thing occur again. I smiled by way of reply, and stayed at the table, not looking to see whether she undressed or went to bed in her clothes. I went to bed myself soon after, and at five o’clock was up again to order the coffee, and to see that the horses were put in. Maton was lying on her bed with all her clothes on, fast asleep, and perspiring with the heat. I woke her, telling her that another time she must sleep more comfortably, as such heats were injurious to health.

She got up and left the room, no doubt to wash, for she returned looking fresh and gay, and bade me good day, and asked me if I would like to give her a kiss.

“I shall be delighted,” I replied; and, after kissing her, I made her hurry over the breakfast, as I wished to reach Dresden that evening. However, I could not manage it, my carriage broke down, and took five hours to mend, so I had to sleep at another posting station. Maton undressed this time, but I had the firmness not to look at her.

Page 71

When I reached Dresden I put up at the "Hotel de Saxe," taking the whole of the first floor. My mother was in the country, and I paid her a visit, much to her delight; we made quite an affecting picture, with my arm in a sling. I also saw my brother John and his wife Therese, Roland, and a Roman girl whom I had known before him, and who made much of me. I also saw my sister, and I then went with my brother to pay my suit to Count Bruhl and to his wife, the daughter of the palatin of Kiowia, who was delighted to hear news of her family. I was welcomed everywhere, and everywhere I had to tell the story of my duel. I confess that very little pressing was required, for I was very proud of it.

At this period the States were assembled in Dresden, and Prince Xavier, uncle of the Elector, was regent during his minority.

The same evening I went to the opera-house, where faro was played. I played, but prudently, for my capital only consisted of eighteen hundred ducats.

When I came back we had a good supper, and Maton pleased me both by her appetite and amiability. When we had finished I affectionately asked her if she would like to share my bed, and she replied as tenderly that she was wholly mine. And so, after passing a voluptuous night, we rose in the morning the best friends in the world.

I spent the whole morning in furnishing her toilette. A good many people called on me, and wanted to be presented to Maton; but my answer was that, as she was only my housekeeper, and not my wife, I could not have the pleasure of introducing her. In the same way I had instructed her that she was not to let anyone in when I was away. She was working in her room on the linen I had provided for her, aided in her task by a seamstress. Nevertheless, I did not want to make her a slave, so I occasionally took her into the pleasant suburbs of Dresden, where she was at liberty to speak to any of my acquaintances we might meet.

This reserve of mine which lasted for the fortnight we stayed in Dresden was mortifying for all the young officers in the place, and especially for the Comte de Bellegarde, who was not accustomed to being denied any girl to whom he chose to take a fancy. He was a fine young fellow, of great boldness and even impudence, and one day he came into our room and asked me to give him a dinner just as Maton and myself were sitting down to table. I could not refuse him, and I could not request Maton to leave the room, so from the beginning to the end of the meal he showered his military jokes and attentions on her, though he was perfectly polite the whole time. Maton behaved very well; she was not prudish, nor did she forget the respect she owed to me and indeed to herself.

I was accustomed to take a siesta every day after dinner, so half an hour after the conclusion of the meal I stated the fact and begged him to leave us. He asked smilingly if the lady took a siesta too, and I replied that we usually took it together. This made

him take up his hat and cane, and as he did so he asked us both to dine with him the next day. I replied that I never took Maton out anywhere, but that he would be welcome to come and take pot-luck with us every day if he liked.

Page 72

This refusal exhausted his resources, and he took his leave if not angrily, at least very coldly.

My mother returned to her town apartments, which were opposite to mine, and the next day when I was calling on her I noticed the erker (a sort of grating in the Spanish fashion) which indicated my rooms in the hotel. I happened to look in that direction and I saw Maton at the window standing up and talking to M. de Bellegarde, who was at a neighbouring window. This window belonged to a room which adjoined my suite of rooms, but did not belong to it. This discovery amused me. I knew what I was about, and did not fear to be made a cuckold in spite of myself. I was sure I had not been observed, and I was not going to allow any trespassers. I was jealous, in fact; but the jealousy was of the mind, not the heart.

I came in to dinner in the highest spirits, and Maton was as gay as myself. I led the conversation up to Bellegarde, and said I believed him to be in love with her.

"Oh, he is like all officers with girls; but I don't think he is more in love with me than any other girl."

"Oh, but didn't he come to call on me this morning?"

"Certainly not; and if he had come the maid would have told him you were out."

"Did you not notice him walking up and down 'under the windows?"

"No."

This was enough for me; I knew they had laid a plot together. Maton was deceiving me, and I should be cheated in twenty-four hours unless I took care. At my age such treason should not have astonished me, but my vanity would not allow me to admit the fact.

I dissembled my feelings and caressed the traitress, and then leaving the house I went to the theatre where I played with some success and returned home while the second act was in progress; it was still daylight. The waiter was at the door, and I asked him whether there were any rooms besides those which I occupied on the first floor. "Yes, two rooms, both looking on the street."

"Tell the landlord that I will take them both."

"They were taken yesterday evening."

"By whom?"

"By a Swiss officer, who is entertaining a party of friends to supper here this evening."



I said no more lest I should awaken suspicion; but I felt sure that Bellegarde could easily obtain access to my rooms from his. Indeed, there was a door leading to the room where Maton slept with her maid when I did not care to have her in my room. The door was bolted on her side, but as she was in the plot there was not much security in this.

I went upstairs softly, and finding Maton on the balcony, I said, after some indifferent conversation, that I should like to change rooms.

“You shall have my room,” I said, “and I will have yours; I can read there, and see the people going by.”

She thought it a very good idea, and added that it would serve us both if I would allow her to sit there when I was out.

Page 73

This reply shewed me that Maton was an old hand, and that I had better give her up if I did not wish to be duped.

I changed the rooms, and we supped pleasantly together, laughing and talking, and in spite of all her craft Maton did not notice any change in me.

I remained alone in my new room, and soon heard the voices of Bellegarde and his merry companions. I went on to the balcony, but the curtains of Bellegarde's room were drawn, as if to assure me that there was no complot. However, I was not so easily deceived, and I found afterwards that Mercury had warned Jupiter that Amphytrion had changed his room.

Next day, a severe headache, a thing from which I seldom suffer, kept me to the house all day. I had myself let blood, and my worthy mother, who came to keep me company, dined with Maton. My mother had taken a weakness for the girl, and had often asked me to let her come and see her, but I had the good sense to refuse this request. The next day I was still far from well, and took medicine, and in the evening, to my horror, I found myself attacked by a fearful disease. This must be a present from Maton, for I had not known anyone else since leaving Leopol. I spent a troubled night, rage and indignation being my principal emotions; and next morning, coming upon Maton suddenly, I found everything in the most disgusting state. The wretched creature confessed she had been infected for the last six months, but that she had hoped not to give it me, as she had washed herself carefully whenever she thought I was going to have to do with her.

"Wretch, you have poisoned me; but nobody shall know it, as it is by my own fault, and I am ashamed of it. Get up, and you shall see how generous I can be."

She got up, and I had all the linen I had given her packed into a trunk. This done, I told my man to take a small room for her at another inn. His errand was soon over, and I then told Maton to go immediately, as I had done with her. I gave her fifty crowns, and made her sign a receipt specifying the reason why I had sent her away, and acknowledging that she had no further claim upon me. The conditions were humiliating, and she wished me to soften them down, but she soon gave in when I told her that unless she signed I would turn her into the streets as naked as when I found her.

"What am I to do here? I don't know anyone."

"If you like to return to Breslau I will pay your expenses there."

She made no answer, so I sent her away bag and baggage, and merely turned my back on her when she went down on her knees to excite my compassion.

I got rid of her without the slightest feeling of pity, for from what she had done to me and from what she was preparing to do I considered her as a mere monster, who would sooner or later have cost me my life.

I left the inn the following day, and I took a furnished apartment on the first floor of the house where my mother lived for six months, and proceeded about my cure. Everyone asked me what I had done with my housekeeper, and I said that having no further need of her services I had sent her away.

Page 74

A week afterwards my brother John came to tell me that Bellegarde and five or six of his friends were on the sick list; Maton had certainly lost no time.

"I am sorry for them, but it's their own fault; why didn't they take more care?"

"But the girl came to Dresden with you."

"Yes, and I sent her about her business. It was enough for me to keep them off while she was under my charge. Tell them that if they complain of me they are wrong, and still more wrong to publish their shame. Let them learn discretion and get themselves cured in secrecy, if they do not want sensible men to laugh at them. Don't you think I am right?"

"The adventure is not a very honourable one for you."

"I know it, and that's why I say nothing; I am not such a fool as to proclaim my shame from the housetops. These friends of yours must be simpletons indeed; they must have known that I had good reasons for sending the girl away, and should consequently have been on their guard. They deserve what they got, and I hope it may be a lesson to them."

"They are all astonished at your being well."

"You may comfort them by saying that I have been as badly treated as they, but that I have held my tongue, not wishing to pass for a simpleton."

Poor John saw he had been a simpleton himself and departed in silence. I put myself under a severe diet, and by the middle of August my health was re-established.

About this time, Prince Adam Czartoryski's sister came to Dresden, lodging with Count Bruhl. I had the honour of paying my court to her, and I heard from her own mouth that her royal cousin had had the weakness to let himself be imposed on by calumnies about me. I told her that I was of Ariosto's opinion that all the virtues are nothing worth unless they are covered with the veil of constancy.

"You saw yourself when I supped with you, how his majesty completely ignored me. Your highness will be going to Paris next year; you will meet me there and you can write to the king that if I had been burnt in effigy I should not venture to shew myself."

The September fair being a great occasion at Leipzig, I went there to regain my size by eating larks, for which Leipzig is justly famous. I had played a cautious but a winning game at Dresden, the result of which had been the gain of some hundreds of ducats, so I was able to start for Leipzig with a letter of credit for three thousand crowns on the banker Hohman, an intelligent old man of upwards of eighty. It was of him I heard that the hair of the Empress of Russia, which looked a dark brown or even black, had been

originally quite fair. The old banker had seen her at Stettin every day between her seventh and tenth years, and told me that even then they had begun to comb her hair with lead combs, and to rub a certain composition into it. From an early age Catherine had been looked upon as the future bride of the Duke of Holstein, afterwards the hapless Peter III. The Russians are fair as a rule, and so it was thought it that the reigning family should be dark.

Page 75

Here I will note down a pleasant adventure I had at Leipzig. The Princess of Aremberg had arrived from Vienna, and was staying at the same hotel as myself. She took a fancy to go to the fair incognito, and as she had a large suite she dressed up one of her maids as the princess, and mingled with her following. I suppose my readers to be aware that this princess was witty and beautiful, and that she was the favourite mistress of the Emperor Francis the First.

I heard of his masquerade, and leaving my hotel at the same time I followed her till she stopped at a stall, and then going up to her and addressing her as one would any other maid, I asked if that (pointing at the false princess) were really the famous Princess of Aremberg.

"Certainly," she replied.

"I can scarcely believe it, for she is not pretty, and she, has, not the look nor the manners of a princess."

"Perhaps you are not a good judge of princesses."

"I have seen enough of them anyhow, and to prove that I am a good judge I say that it is you who ought to be the princess; I would willingly give a hundred ducats to spend the night with you."

"A hundred ducats! What would you do if I were to take you at your word?"

"Try me. I lodge at the same hotel as you, and if yet can contrive ways and means, I will give you the money in advance, but not till I am sure of my prize, for I don't like being taken in."

"Very good. Say not a word to anyone, but try to speak with me either before or after supper. If you are brave enough to face certain risks, we will spend the night together."

"What is your name?"

"Caroline."

I felt certain it would come to nothing, but I was glad to have amused the princess, and to have let her know that I appreciated her beauties, and I resolved to go on with the part I was playing. About supper-time I began a promenade near the princess's apartments, stopping every now and then in front of the room where her women were sitting, till one of them came out to ask me if I wanted anything.

"I want to speak for a moment to one of your companions to whom I had the pleasure of talking at the fair."



"You mean Caroline, I expect?"

"Yes."

"She is waiting on the princess, but she will be out in half an hour."

I spent this half hour in my own room, and then returned to dance attendance. Before long the same maid to whom I had spoken came up to me and told me to wait in a closet which she shewed me, telling me that Caroline would be there before long. I went into the closet, which was small, dark, and uncomfortable. I was soon joined by a woman. This time I was sure it was the real Caroline, but I said nothing.

She came, in, took my hand, and told me that if I would wait there she would come to me as soon as her mistress was in bed.

"Without any light?"

Page 76

“Of course, or else the people of the house would notice it, and I should not like that.”

“I cannot do anything without light, charming Caroline; and besides, this closet is not a very nice place to pass five or six hours. There is another alternative, the first room above is mine. I shall be alone, and I swear to you that no one shall come in; come up and make me happy; I have got the hundred ducats here.”

“Impossible! I dare not go upstairs for a million ducats.”

“So much the worse for you, as I am not going to stay in this hole which has only a chair in it, if you offer me a million and a half. Farewell, sweet Caroline.”

“Wait a moment; let me go out first.”

The sly puss went out quickly enough, but I was as sharp as she, and trod on the tail of her dress so that she could not shut the door after her. So we went out together, and I left her at the door, saying,—

“Good night, Caroline, you see it was no use.”

I went to bed well pleased with the incident. The princess, it was plain, had intended to make me pass the night in the hole of a closet, as a punishment for having dared to ask the mistress of an emperor to sleep with me for a hundred crowns.

Two days later, as I was buying a pair of lace cuffs, the princess came into the shop with Count Zinzendorf, whom I had known at Paris twelve years before just as I was making way for the lady the count recognized me, and asked me if I knew anything about the Casanova that had fought the duel at Warsaw.

“Alas! count, I am that Casanova, and here is my arm still in a sling.”

“I congratulate you, my dear fellow; I should like to hear about it.”

With these words he introduced me to the princess, asking her if she had heard of the duel.

“Yes; I heard something about it in the papers. So this is the hero of the tale. Delighted to make your acquaintance.”

The princess spoke with great kindness, but with the cool politeness of the Court. She did not give me the slightest sign of recognition, and of course I imitated her in her reserve.

I visited the count in the afternoon, and he begged me to come and see the princess, who would be delighted to hear the account of my duel from my own lips, and I followed



him to her apartment with pleasure. The princess listened to my narrative in stately sort, and her women never looked at me. She went away the day after, and the story went no farther.

Towards the end of the fair I received a very unexpected visit from the fair Madame Castelbajac. I was just sitting down to table to eat a dozen larks, when she made her appearance.

“What, madam, you here!”

“Yes, to my sorrow. I have been here for the last three weeks, and have seen you several times, but you have always avoided us.”

“Who are ‘us’?”

“Schwerin and myself”

“Schwerin is here, is he?”

Page 77

“Yes; and in prison on account of a forged bill. I am sure I do not know what they will do to the poor wretch. He would have been wise to have fled, but it seems as if he wanted to get hanged.”

“And you have been with him ever since you left England? that is, three years ago.”

“Exactly. Our occupation is robbing, cheating, and escaping from one land to another. Never was a woman so unhappy as I.”

“For how much is the forged bill?”

“For three hundred crowns. Do a generous action M. Casanova, and let bygones be bygones; deliver the poor wretch from the gallows and me from death, for if he is hanged I shall kill myself.”

“Indeed, madam, he may hang for me, for he did his best to send me to the gallows with his forged bills; but I confess I pity you. So much, indeed, that I invite you to come to Dresden with me the day after to-morrow, and I promise to give you three hundred crowns as soon as Schwerin has undergone the extreme penalty of the law. I can’t understand how a woman like you can have fallen in love with a man that has neither face, nor talents, nor wit, nor fortune, for all that he has to boast of is his name of Schwerin.”

“I confess, to my shame, that I never loved him. Ever since the other rogue, Castelbajac—who, by the way, was never married to me—made me know him, I have only lived with him by force, though his tears and his despairs have excited my compassion. If destiny had given me an honest man in his stead, I would have forsaken him long ago, for sooner or later he will be the death of me.”

“Where do you live?”

“Nowhere. I have been turned out into the street with nothing but the clothes on my back. Have compassion on me.”

With these words the hapless woman threw herself at my knees and burst into tears. I was much affected. The waiter of the inn stood staring with amazement till I told him to go out. I may safely say that this woman was one of the most handsome in France; she was probably about twenty-six years old. She had been the wife of a druggist of Montpellier, and had been so unfortunate as to let Castelbajac seduce her. At London her beauty had produced no impression on me, my heart was another’s; nevertheless, she was made to seduce the heart of man.

I raised her from her knees, and said I felt inclined to help her, but that in the first place she must calm herself, and in the second share my supper. The waiter brought another

bed and put it in my room, without receiving any orders to do so; this made me feel inclined to laugh.

The appetite with which the poor woman ate, despite her sorrow, reminded me of the matron of Ephesus. When supper was over I gave her her choice: she might either stay in Leipzig and fare as best she might, or I would reclaim her effects, take her with me to Dresden, and pay her a hundred gold ducats as soon as I could be certain that she would not give the money to the wretch who had reduced her to such an extremity. She did not ask much time for reflection. She said that it would be no good for her to stay in Leipzig, for she could do nothing for the wretched Schwerin or even keep herself for a day, for she had not got a farthing. She would have to beg or to become a prostitute, and she could not make up her mind to either course.

Page 78

"Indeed," she concluded, "if you were to give me the hundred ducats this moment, and I used them to free Schwerin, I should be no better off than before; so I accept your generous offer thankfully."

I embraced her, promised to get back what her landlord had seized for rent, and then begged her to go to bed, as she was in need of rest.

"I see," she answered, "that either out of liking or for politeness' sake you will ask me for those favours which I should be only too happy to grant, but if I allowed that it would be a bad return indeed for your kindness. Look at my linen, and behold in what a state that unhappy wretch has left me!"

I saw that I ran the risk of being infected again, and thanked her for warning me of the danger I ran. In spite of her faults she was a woman of feeling, and had an excellent heart, and from these good qualities of hers proceeded all her misfortunes.

The next morning I arranged for the redemption of her effects, which cost me sixty crowns of Saxony, and in the afternoon the poor woman saw herself once more in possession of her belongings, which she had thought never to see again. She seemed profoundly grateful, and deplored her state, which hindered her from proving the warmth of her feelings.

Such is the way of women: a grateful woman has only one way of shewing her gratitude, and that is to surrender herself without reserve. A man is different, but we are differently constituted; a man is made to give and a woman to receive.

The next day, a short while before we left, the broker I had employed in the redemption of the lady's effects, told me that the banker, whom Schwerin had cheated, was going to send an express to Berlin, to enquire whether the king would object to Count Schwerin's being proceeded against with the utmost rigour of the law.

"Alas!" cried his late mistress, "that's what he was most afraid of. It's all up with him. The King of Prussia will pay his debts, but he will end his days at Spandau. Why didn't they put him there before I ever knew him?"

She left Leipzig with me, and our appearance at Dresden caused a good deal of surprise. She was not a mere girl, like Maton; she had a good appearance, and a modest yet distinguished manner. I called her Countess Blasin, and introduced her to my mother and relations, and put her in my best room. I summoned the doctor who had treated me, and made him swear not to disclose the countess's state, but to tell everyone that he came to see me. I took her to the theatre, and it was my humour to have her regarded as a person of distinction. Good treatment soon restored her to health, and by the end of November she believed herself in a state to reward me for my kindness.



The wedding was a secret one, but none the less pleasant; and as if by way of wedding present the next day I heard that the King of Prussia had paid Schwerin's debts, and had had him brought to Berlin under a strong escort. If he is alive, the rascal is at Spandau to this day.

Page 79

The time had come for me to pay her the hundred ducats. I told her frankly that I was obliged to go to Portugal, and that I could not make my appearance there in company with a pretty woman without failing in my project. I added that my means would not allow me to pay double expenses for so long a journey.

She had received too many proofs of my love to think for a moment that I had got tired of her, and wanted to be on with some other woman. She told me that she owed everything to me, while I owed nothing to her; and that all she asked of me was to enable her to return to Montpellier.

"I have relations there," said she, "who will be glad to see me, and I hope that my husband will let me return to him. I am the Prodigal Son, and I hope to find in him the forgiving father."

I told her I would do my utmost to send her home in safety and comfort.

Towards the middle of December I left Dresden with Madame Blasin. My purse only contained four hundred ducats, for I had had a run of bad luck at play; and the journey to Leipzig had cost me altogether three hundred ducats. I told my mistress nothing of all this, for my only thought was how to please her.

We stayed a short while at Prague, and reached Vienna on Christmas Day. We put up at the "Red Bull," the Countess Blasin (who had been transformed into a milliner) in one room, and I in another, so that we might pass for strangers while continuing our intimacy.

The next morning, as we were taking coffee together, two individuals came into the room, and asked the rude question,—

"Who are you, madam?"

"My name is Blasin."

"Who is this gentleman?"

"You had better ask him."

"What are you doing at Vienna?"

"Taking coffee. I should have thought you could have seen that for yourselves."

"If the gentleman is not your husband, you will leave the town within twenty-four hours."

"The gentleman is my friend, and not my husband; and I shall leave Vienna exactly when I choose, unless you make me go away by force."

“Very good. We are aware, sir, that you have a separate room, but that makes no difference.”

Thereupon one of the policemen entered my room, I following him.

“What do you want here?” said I.

“I am looking at your bed, and I can see you have not slept in it. That’s enough.”

“The devil! What business have you here at all, and who authorizes such disgraceful proceedings?”

He made no reply, but returned to Madame Blasin’s room, where they both ordered her to leave Vienna in the course of twenty-four hours, and then they both left us.

“Dress yourself,” said I to her, “and tell the French ambassador the whole story. Tell him that you are a milliner, Blasin by name, and that all you want is to go from here to Strasburg, and from there to Montpellier.”

Page 80

While she was dressing I ordered a carriage and a servant to be in attendance. She returned in an hour's time, and said the ambassador had assured her that she would be left alone, and need not leave Vienna till she thought fit. I took her to mass in triumph, and then, as the weather was bad, we spent the rest of the day in eating and drinking and sitting by the fire.

At eight o'clock in the evening the landlord came up and said very politely that he had been ordered by the police to give the lady a room at some distance from mine, and that he was obliged to obey.

"I am quite ready to change my room," said Madame Blasin, with a smile.

"Is the lady to sup alone?" I asked.

"I have received no instructions on that point."

"Then I will sup with her, and I hope you will treat us well."

"You shall be well served, sir."

In spite of the detestable and tyrannical police we spent the last four days and nights together in the closest intimacy. When she left I wanted her to take fifty Louis; but she would only have thirty, saying that she could travel to Montpellier on that sum, and have money in her pocket when she got there. Our parting was an affecting one. She wrote to me from Strasburg, and we shall hear of her again when I describe my visit to Montpellier.

The first day of the year 1767 I took an apartment in the house of a certain Mr. Schroder, and I took letters of introduction to Madame de Salmor and Madame de Stahremberg. I then called on the elder Calsabigi, who was in the service of Prince Kaunitz.

This Calsabigi, whose whole body was one mass of eruption, always worked in bed, and the minister, his master, went to see him almost every day. I went constantly to the theatre, where Madame Vestris was dancing. On January the 7th or 8th, I saw the empress dowager come to the theatre dressed in black; she was received with applause, as this was the first appearance she had made since the death of her husband. At Vienna I met the Comte de la Perouse, who was trying to induce the empress to give him half a million of florins, which Charles VI. owed his father. Through him I made the acquaintance of the Spaniard Las Casas, a man of intelligence, and, what is a rare thing in a Spaniard, free from prejudices. I also met at the count's house the Venetian Uccelli, with whom I had been at St. Cyprian's College at Muran; he was, at the time of which I write, secretary to the ambassador, Polo Renieri. This gentleman had a great esteem for me, but my affair with the State Inquisitors prevented him from

receiving me. My friend Campioni arrived at this date from Warsaw; he had passed through Cracovia. I accommodated him in my apartment with great pleasure. He had an engagement at London, but to my great delight he was able to spend a couple of months with me.

Prince Charles of Courland, who had been at Venice and had been well received by M. de Bragadin and my other friends, had been in Vienna and had left it a fortnight before my arrival to return to Venice. Prince Charles wrote to tell me that there was no bounds to the care and kindness of my Venetian friends, and that he would be grateful to me for all his days.

Page 81

I lived very quietly at Vienna; my health was good, and I thought of nothing but my journey to Portugal, which I intended to take place in the spring. I saw no company of any kind, whether good or ill. I often called on Calsabigi, who made a parade of his Atheism, and slandered my friend Metastasio, who despised him. Calsabigi knew it and laughed at him; he was a profound politician and the right hand of Prince Kaunitz.

One day after dinner, as I was sitting at table with my friend Campioni, a pretty little girl, between twelve and thirteen, as I should imagine, came into my room with mingled boldness and fear, and made me a low bow. I asked her what she wanted, and she replied in Latin verse to the effect that her mother was in the next room, and that if I liked she would come in. I replied in Latin prose that I did not care about seeing her mother, telling her my reasons with great plainness. She replied with four Latin lines, but as they were not to the point I could see that she had learnt them by heart, and repeated them like a parrot. She went on-still in Latin verse—to tell me that her mother must come in or else the authorities might think I was abusing her.

This last phrase was uttered with all the directness of the Latin style. It made me burst out laughing, and I felt inclined to explain to her what she had said in her own language. The little slut told me she was a Venetian, and this putting me at my ease I told her that the authorities would never suspect her of doing such a thing as she was too young. At this the girl seemed to reflect a moment, and then recited some verses from the Priapeia to the effect that unripe fruit is often more piquant than that which is ripe. This was enough to set me on fire, and Campioni, seeing that he was not wanted, went back to his room.

I drew her gently to me and asked her if her father was at Vienna. She said yes, and instead of repulsing my caresses she proceeded to accompany my actions with the recital of erotic verses. I sent her away with a fee of two ducats, but before she went she gave me her address written in German with four Latin verses beneath, stating that her bedfellow would find her either Hebe or Ganymede, according to his liking.

I could not help admiring the ingenuity of her father, who thus contrived to make a living out of his daughters. She was a pretty girl enough, but at Vienna pretty girls are so common that they often have to starve in spite of their charms. The Latin verses had been thrown in as an attraction in this case, but I did not think she would find it very remunerative in Vienna.

Page 82

Next evening my evil genius made me go and seek her out at the address she had given me. Although I was forty-two years old, in spite of the experience I had had, I was so foolish as to go alone. The girl saw me coming from the window, and guessing that I was looking for her, she came down and shewed me in. I went in, I went upstairs, and when I found myself in the presence of the wretch Pocchini my blood froze in my veins. A feeling of false shame prevented my retracing my steps, as it might have looked as if I had been afraid. In the same room were his pretended wife, Catina, two Slavonic-looking assassins, and the decoy-duck. I saw that this was not a laughing matter, so I dissembled to the best of my ability, and made up my mind to leave the place in five minutes' time.

Pocchini, swearing and blaspheming, began to reproach me with the manner in which I had treated him in England, and said that his time had come, and that my life was in his hands. One of the two Slavs broke in, and said we must make friends, and so made me sit down, opened a bottle, and said we must drink together. I tried to put as good a face upon it as I could, but I begged to be excused, on which Pocchini swore that I was afraid of having to pay for the bottle of wine.

"You are mistaken," said I; "I am quite ready to pay."

I put my hand in my pocket to take out a ducat without drawing out my purse, but the Slav told me I need not be afraid, as I was amongst honest people. Again shame made me yield, and as I had some difficulty in extracting my purse, the Slav kindly did it for me. Pocchini immediately snatched it from his hands, and said he should keep it as part compensation for all I had made him endure.

I saw that it was a concerted scheme, and said with a smile that he could do as he liked, and so I rose to leave them. The Slav said we must embrace each other, and on my declaring that to be unnecessary, he and his comrade drew their sabres, and I thought myself undone. Without more ado, I hastened to embrace them. To my astonishment they let me go, and I went home in a grievous state, and not knowing what else to do went to bed.