

"I am sober, madame," said I, "and I have two messages for you."

"You present yourself in a strange way. Pray be brief," and she glanced anxiously at the clock.

"Time does not press, madame," said I. "Nobody will come."

"Nobody will? What do you mean? I expect nobody."

"Precisely, madame, and nobody will come."

Her ivory fan flicked between her fingers with a sharp click.

"What do you want?" she said.

"I deliver my messages."

"Well?"

"First, Lord Darnsbrough offers his apologies for being compelled to leave for Paris without rendering his farewell."

She turned very red and then very white. But she restrained herself.

"And the second?"

"His Royal Highness requests that you will accept yourself and my escort for an immediate return to Glottenberg."

"And his reasons?"

"Oh, madame, as if I should inquire them!"

"You are merely insolent, sir. I shall not go to-night."

"His Royal Highness was very urgent."

She looked at me for a moment.

"Why had Lord Darnsbrough to leave so suddenly?" she asked suspiciously.

"His wife wished it."

"Did she know where he was?"

"Apparently. She followed him to Glottenberg. She arrived there yesterday."

"Now I see—now I understand! I had to deal with a traitor."

"You must bestow trust if you desire not to be deceived, madame. You dared to use me as a go-between."

"You had had practice in the trade."

The Princess had a turn for repartee. I could not have set her right without quite an argument. I evaded the point.

"And yet your Royal Highness thought me a clumsy animal!"

"Oh," she said, with a slight laugh, "it's wounded amour propre, is it? Come, Mr. Jason, I apologize. You are all that is brilliant and delightful—and English."

"Your Royal Highness is too good."

"And now, Mr. Jason, your device being accomplished, I suppose I may bid you good-night?"

"That I must press the Prince's request on your notice."

She sighed her usual impatient, petulant little sigh.

"Oh, you are tiresome! Pray go."

"I cannot go without you, madame."

"I am not going—and my establishment does not admit of my entertaining gentlemen," she said, with smiling irony.

"Your Royal Highness refuses to allow me to attend you to Glottenberg?"

"I order you to leave this room."

"Finally refuses?"

"Go!"

"Then I must add that I am commissioned, if necessary, to convey your Royal Highness to Glottenberg."

"To convey me?"

I bowed.

"You dare to threaten me?"

"I follow my instructions. Will you come, madame, or—"

"Well?"

"Will you be taken?"

I was not surprised at her vexation. Dumergue had, in his haste, called her a "little devil." She looked at them.

"You mean," she asked slowly, "that you will use force?"

I bowed.

"Then I yield," she said, after a pause. I called

the maid, and told her to order the carriage in five minutes. The silence was unbroken till it came round. The Princess went into her room, and returned in cloak and hat, carrying a large muff. She was smiling.

"Ah, Mr. Jason, what can a woman do against men? I am ready. We will go alone. The servants can follow."

I handed her into the coach, ordering the coachman to drive fast. He was the only man with us, and we were alone inside.

I began, perhaps stupidly, to apologize for my peevish conduct. The Princess smiled amiably.

"I like a man of resolution," she said, edging. I thought, a trifle nearer me, her hands nestling in her muff.

Apparently she was going to try the effect of amiability. I was prepared for this. She would not tempt me in that way.

"Your Royal Highness is most forgiving."

"Oh, that is my way," she answered, with the kindest possible glance, and she came nearer still.

"You are a most generous foe."

She turned to me with a dazzling smile.

"Don't say *foe*," she said, with a pretty lingering on the last word. And as she said it, I felt a knife driven hard into my ribs, and the muff dropped to the ground.

"God in heaven!" I cried.

The Princess flung herself into the corner of the carriage.

"Ha—ha—ha! Ha—ha—ha!" she laughed, merrily, musically, fiendishly.

I tried to clutch her, I believe I should have killed her. I was half mad. But the blood was oozing fast from the wound—only the knife itself held my life in. Things danced before my eyes, and my hands fell on my lap.

The carriage stopped, the door opened, and the coachman appeared. It was all like a dream to me.

"Take his feet," said the Princess. The man obeyed, and between them they lifted, or, rather, hauled and pushed me out of the carriage, and laid me by the roadside. I was almost in a faint, and the last thing I was conscious of was a pretty mocking mouth, which said:

"Won't you escort me, Mr. Jason?"—and then added to the coachman, "To Glottenberg—quick!"

I did not die. I was picked up by some good folk, and well tended. Dumergue arrived and looked after me, and in a couple of weeks I was on my legs.

"Now for Glottenberg!" said I.

Dumergue shook his head.

"You won't be admitted to the town."

"Not admitted!"

"No. They have made it up—for the time. There must be no scandal. Come, Jason, surely you see that?"

"She tried to murder me."

"Oh, quite, quite," said he. "But you can't prosecute her."

"And I am to be turned adrift by the Prince?"

"What use would it be to return? No doubt you annoyed her very much."

"I wish you had undertaken the job."

"I know her. I should have ridden outside."

"It is, then, the Prince's wish that I should not return?"

"Yes. But he charges me to say that he will never forget your friendly services."

I was disgusted. But I would force myself on no man.

"Then I'll go home."

"That will be much the best," he answered, with revolting alacrity.

"I say, Dumergue, what does the Princess say about me?"

"She laughs every time your name is mentioned, and—"

"The devil take her!"

"She says you may keep the knife!"

I have it still, a little tortoise-shell-handled thing, with a sharp—a very sharp—point. On the blade is

engraved in German letters, "Sophia." It is a pretty toy, and in its delicacy, its tinniness, its elegance, its seeming harmlessness, and its very sharp point, it reminds me much of Princess Ferdinand of Glottenberg.

THE END.

Charles Wagner's Sayings

And common sense—do you not find what is designated by this name becoming as rare as the common-sense customs of other days? Common sense has become an old story. We must have something new, and we create a new existence, a refinement of living, that the world has not the wherewithal to produce. It is so agreeable to be distinguished! Instead of conducting ourselves like rational beings, and using the means most obviously at our command, we arrive, by dint of absolute genius, at the most astonishing singularities. Better off the track than on the main line! All the bodily defects and deformities that orthopedy treats, give but a feeble idea of the humps, the tortuosities, the dislocations we have inflicted upon ourselves in order to depart from simple common sense; and at our own expense we learn that one does not deform himself with impunity. Novelty, after all, is ephemeral. Nothing endures but the eternal commonplace; and if one departs from that, it is to run the most perilous risks. Happy he who is able to reclaim himself, who finds the way back to simplicity.

The history of humanity is the history of indomitable hope; otherwise everything would have been over long ago. To press forward under his burdens, to guide himself in the night, to retrieve his falls and his failures, to escape despair even in death, man has need of hoping always, and sometimes against all hope. Here is the cordial that sustains him. Had we only logic, we should have long ago drawn the conclusion: Death has everywhere the last word!—and we should be dead of the idea. But we have hope, and that is why we live and believe in life.

Your religion is good if it is vital and active, if it nourishes in you confidence, hope, love, and a sentiment of the infinite value of existence; if it is allied with what is best in you against what is worst, and holds forever before you the necessity of becoming a new man; if it makes you understand that pain is a deliverer; if it increases your respect for the conscience of others; if it renders forgiveness more easy, fortune less arrogant, duty more dear, the beyond less visionary. If it does these things it is good, little matter its name. However rudimentary it may be, when it fills this office it comes from the true source, it binds you to man and to God.

When a man hates his work, or goes about it with indifference, all the forces of earth cannot make him follow it with enthusiasm. But he who loves his office moves of himself; not only is it needless to compel him, but it would be impossible to turn him aside. And this is true of everybody. The great thing is to have felt the sanctity and immortal beauty of our obscure destiny; to have been led by a series of experiences to love this life for its griefs and its hopes, to love men for their weakness and their greatness, and to belong to humanity through the heart, the intelligence and the soul. Then an unknown power takes possession of us, as the wind of the sails of a ship, and bears us toward pity and justice. And yielding to its irresistible impulse, we say: *I cannot help it, something is stronger than I.*

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