# MY LADY ROTHA.

## A ROMANCE.

By STANLEY J. WEYMAN, Author of "A Gentleman of France," "The House of the Wolf," &c.

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### CHAPTER XX.

MORE HASTE, LESS SPEED.

The dawn came slowly. Night, loath to unveil what the valley had to show, hung there long after the wooded knobs that rose along the ridge had begun to appear, looking like gray and misty islands in a sea of vapor. Many cried for the light—what night passes that some do not?—but none more impatiently than a woman, whose unquiet figure began with the first glimmer to pace the top of the hill. Sometimes she walked hurriedly to and fro with her face to the sky; sometimes she stood and peered into the depths where the fires still glowed, or listened with shrinking ears to the wailing that rose out of the darkness.

It was the Countess. She had lain down, because they had bidden her do so, and told her that nothing could be done while night lasted. But with the first dawn she was on foot, so impatient that her own people dared not come near her, so imperious that the General's troopers crept away abashed.

The fight in the valley and the dreadful things she had seen and heard at nightfall had shaken her nerves. The absence of her friends had finished the work. She was almost distraught this morning. If this was war, this mergless butchery, this infliction of horrible pain on man and beast—their screams still rang in her ears—she had seen enough. Only let her get her friends back, and escape to some place where these things would not happen, and she asked no more.

The light, as it grew stronger, the sun, as it rose, filling the sky with glory, failed to comfort her; for the one disclosed the dead, lying white and stripped in the valley below like a flock of sheep grazing; the other seemed by its very cheerfulness to mock her. She was racing like a lioness, when the General at last, though still early, appeared, and came toward her, his hat in his hand.

His eye was still bright, his cheek was still flushed. He had lain much of the night thinking his own thoughts, until he had become so wrapped in himself and his plans that his shrewdness was for once at fault, and he failed to read the signs in her face which his own soldiers had interpreted. He was all fire and victory; she sick of bloodshed and ambition. For the first time since they had come together she was likely to see him as he was.

"Countess," he said, as he stopped before her, "you will do yourself harm, I fear. You were on foot, I am told, before it was light."

"It is true," she said, shuddering and restraining herself by an effort.

"It was foolish," he said, gently. "You may be sure that as soon as anything is heard the news will be brought to you. And to be missing is not to be dead—necessarily."

"Thank you," she answered, her lip quivering. She flashed a look of scorn at him, but he did not see it. Her hands opened and closed convulsively.

"He was last seen in the pursuit," the General continued smoothly, flattering himself that in suppressing his own triumphant thoughts and purposes and talking her talk he was doing much. "A score or more of them got away together. It is quite possible they carried him off a prisoner."

"And Martin?" she said in a choking voice. She could not stand still, and had begun already to pace up and down again. He walked beside her.

He shrugged his shoulders. "I know nothing about him," he said, scarcely concealing a sneer. "The man went where he was not sent. I hope for the best, but—" He spread out his hands and shook his head.

"Oh!" she said. She was bursting with indignation. The sight of the dead lying below had stirred her nature to its depths. She felt intuitively the shallowness of his sympathy, the selfishness of his thoughts. She knew that he had it on his lips to talk to her of his triumph, and hated him for it. The horror which the day-old battlefield sometimes inspires in the veteran was on her. She was trembling all over, and only by a great effort kept herself from tears and fainting.

"The man is useful to you?" he said after a pause. He felt he had gone wrong.

She bowed in silence.

"Almost necessary, I suppose?"

She bowed again. She could not speak. It was wonderful. Yesterday she had liked this man, to-day she almost hated him.

But he knew nothing of that. He looked round him with pride. Below, in the valley, parties of men were going to and fro with a sparkle and sheen of pikes. Now and again a trumpet spoke, giving an order. On the hill, not far from where they walked, a group of officers who had ascended with him sat round a fire watching the preparation of breakfast. And of all he was the lord. He had only to raise a finger to be obeyed. He saw before him a vista of such battles and victories, ending—God knows in what. The Emperor's throne was not above the dreams of such a man, and it moved him to speak.

The flush on his cheek was deeper when he turned to her again. "Yes, I suppose he was necessary to you," he said, "but it should not be so. The Countess of Heritzburg should look elsewhere for help than to a servant. Let me speak plainly, Countess," he continued sadly, "it is becoming I should so speak. I am a plain man. I am neither Baron, Count, nor Prince, Margrave, nor Waldgrave. I have no title but my sword, and no heritage save those who follow me. Yet, if I cannot with the one and the other win a place, I can at least, by fidelity as long and as wide as Heritzburg, I am not John Tzerclas."

"Poor Germany!" the Countess said with a faint smile.

He then interpreted the words in his own favor, and shrugged his shoulders. "Exactly," he said, coldly. "There was a time when your ancestors took Heritzburg with the strong hand. Such another time is coming now. The future is for those who dare, for those who can raise themselves above an old and sinking system, and on its ruins build their own fortunes. Of these men I intend to be one."

The Countess was an ambitious woman. At another time she might have heard his tale with sympathy. But at this moment her heart was full of anxiety for others, and she saw with perfect clearness the selfishness, the narrowness, the hardness of this man. She was angry, too, that he should speak to her now—with the dead lying unburied, and the lost unfound, and strewn round them the ghastly relics of the fight. She looked at him hardly, but she did not say a word; and he, following the exultant march of his own thoughts, went on, heedless of her silence:

"Albert of Wallenstein, starting from far less than I stand here, has become the first man in Germany," he said—"Emperor in all but the name. Your uncle and mine, from a country squire became Marshal and Count of Empire, and saw the greatest quail before him. Ernest of Mansfield, he was baseborn and brook-backed, too, but he lay softly and ruled men all his days, and left a name to tremble at. Countess," the General continued, speaking more hurriedly, and addressing himself though he did not know it, to the feeling which was uppermost in her mind, "you may think that in saying what I am going to say I am choosing an untimely moment; that with the round us, and the air scarce free from powder, I am a fool to talk of love. But"—he hesitated, yet waved his hand abroad with a proud gesture, as if to show that the pause was intentional—"I think I am right. For I offer you no palace, no bed of down, but only myself and my sword. I ask you to share a soldier's fortunes and be the wife and follow the fate of John Tzerclas. Countess, may it be?"

His form seemed to swell as he spoke. He had an air half savage, half triumphant, as he turned to her with that question. The joy of battle was still in his veins. He seemed but half sober, though he had drunk nothing. A timid woman might have succumbed to him, one of lesser soul might have shrunk before him. But the Countess faced him with a pride as great as his own.

"You have spoken plainly," she said, undaunted. "Perhaps you will pardon me if I speak plainly, too."

"I ask no more, sweet cousin," he answered gayly.

"Then let me remind you that you have said much about John Tzerclas," she retorted sharply, and little about the Countess of Heritzburg. You have given excellent reasons why you should speak here, but none why I should answer, for shame, sir," the Countess continued, letting her indignation appear. "I lost last night my nearest relative and my old servant. I am still distracted with anxiety on their account. Yet, because I stand alone, unprotected, and with none of my kin by my side, you choose the time to press your suit. For shame, Gen. Tzerclas."

"Madame!" he exclaimed, forgetting his self in his annoyance—the fever of excitement was still in his blood—"do you think the presence of that dandified silken scarf would have kept me silent? No, my lady!"

She looked at him for a moment, astonished. The contemptuous reference to the Waldgrave, the change of tone, opened her eyes still wider.

"I think you do not understand me," she said coldly.

"I do more; I love you," he answered hotly, almost angrily, and his eyes burned as he looked at her. "You are fit to be a queen, my queen! And if I live, sweet cousin, I will make you one!"

"Let that go by," she said contemptuously, bearing up against his look of admiration as well as she could and continuing to move, so that he had to walk also. "What you do not understand is my nature—which is, not to desert my friends when they are in trouble, nor to play when those who have served me faithfully are missing."

"I can help in either the one nor the other," he answered recklessly. But his brow began to darken, and he stood silent a moment. Then he broke out in a different tone. "By heaven!" he said, "I am in no mood for play. And I think you are playing with me!"

"I do not understand you," she said. Her tone should have frozen him.

"I have asked a question. Will you answer me yes or no?" he persisted, doggedly. "Will you be my wife or will you not?"

She did not blench. This is rather rough wooing, is it not?" she said with fine scorn.

"This is a camp, and I am a soldier."

She shrugged her shoulders. "I do not think I like rough ways," she said.

He controlled himself by a mighty effort. "Pardon me," he said with a sickly smile, which sat ill on his flushed and angry face. "Perhaps I am soldier enough to forget myself. But, like the man in the Bible, I am accustomed to say to some, 'Go,' and they go, and to others, 'Do it,' and it is done. And woe to those who disobey me. Possibly this makes me a rough wooer. But, Countess, the ways of the world are rough; the times are rough. We do not know what to-morrow will bring forth, and whatever we want we want quickly. Here, sweetheart," he continued, drawing a step nearer to her and speaking in a voice he vainly strove to modulate, "a little roughness before marriage is better than ill treatment afterward. I have known men who stood on their knees bring their wives to theirs very quickly after the knot was tied. I am not that kind."

My lady's heart sickened. Despite the assurance of his last words, she saw the man as he was, and she realized that in his eyes, and though his sudden frankness was in reality the result of overmastering excitement, she had the added horror of supposing it to be dictated by her friendless position and the absence of the last men who might have protected her. She knew her only hope lay in her courage, and, though her heart leapt under her bodice, she faced him boldly.

"You wish for an answer?" she asked.

"I have said so," he answered.

"Then I shall not give you one now," she replied with a quiet smile. "You see, General, I am not one of those to whom you can say 'Go,' and they go, and 'Do,' and it is done. I must choose my own time to say yes or no. And this time—I do not like," she continued, looking round and suffering a little shudder to escape her as she thought of the valley below, "I am too coward, but I do not like the smell of blood. You will take time to consider your offer, if you please; and, meanwhile, I think you gallant gentleman enough not to press me against my will."

She had a fan in her hand, and she began to walk again; she held it up between her face and the sun, which was still low. He walked by her side, his brow as black as thunder. He read her thoughts so far correctly that he felt the evasion boded him no good, but the influence of her courage and pride was such that he shrank from throwing down the mask altogether, or using those words which only force could make good. True, it wanted only a little to urge him over the edge, but her lucky star and bold demeanor prevailed for the time, and perhaps the cool, fresh air had sobered him.

"I suppose a lady's wish must be law," he muttered, though still he scowled. "But I hope you will not make a long demand on my patience."

"That, too, you must leave to me," she replied with a flash of coquetry which it cost her much to assume. "This morning I am so full of anxiety I scarcely know what I am saying. Surely your people must know by this time if they—they are among the dead?"

"They are not," he answered sullkily.

"Then they must have been captured?" she said, a tremor in her voice.

He nodded. At that moment a man came up to say that breakfast was ready. The General repeated the message to her.

"With your leave I will take it with my women," she answered with presence of mind. "I slept ill, and I am poor company this morning," she added, smiling faintly.

He ordered over the coals to keep her feet. She longed to weep. She felt herself within an inch of swooning.

He saw she had turned suddenly pale, and he assented with a tolerable grace. "Let me give you my hand to your tent," he said anxiously.

"Willingly," she answered.

It was the last effort of her diplomacy, and she hated herself for it. Still, it won her what she wanted—peace, a respite, a little time to think.

As she sat and shivered in the sunshine, and made believe to eat, and tried to hide her thoughts, even from her women, a crushing sense of her loneliness took possession of her. She had read often and often, with scarce a quickening of the pulses, of men and women in tragic straits—of men and women brought face to face with death and dishonor—but she had never pictured their feelings till now—their despair, their shrinkings, their bitter lookings back, as the iron doors closed upon them. She had never considered that such facts might enter into her own life.

Now, in a sudden, she found herself brought face to face with inexorable things, with the grim realities that have closed, like the narrowing walls of the Inquisition dungeons, on many a gay life. In the valley below they were burying men like rotten sheep. The Wild Huntsman was dead, captured or killed. Martin was gone. She was alone. Life seemed a cheap and uncertain thing, death very near. Pleasure—folly—a dancing on the grave.

Of her own free will she had placed herself in the power of a man who loved her, and whom she now hated with an untimely hatred, that was half fear and half loathing. In his power! Her heart stood still, and then beat faster, as she framed the thought. The sunshine, though it was summer, seemed to fall gray and pale on the tall sward; the morning air, though the day was warm, made her shiver. The trumpet call, the sharp command, the glitter of weapons, that had so lately seemed her imagination, startled her now. The food was like ashes in her mouth. She could not swallow it. She had been blind. And now she must pay for her folly.

She had passed the night in the lee of one of the wooded knolls that studded the ridge, and her fire had been kindled. The nearest group of soldiers—Tzerclas's staff, whose harsh voices and reckless laughter came to her ears at intervals—had their fire full a hundred paces away. For a moment she entertained the desperate idea that she might slip away, alone, or with her maid, and, passing from clump to clump, might gain the valley from which she had ascended, and, hiding in the wood, get somehow to Cassel. The smallest reflection showed her that the plan was not possible, and it was rejected as soon as formed. But a moment later she was tempted to wish that she had put it into effect. An officer made his appearance, with his hat in his hand and an air of haste, and wished to know, with the General's service, whether she could be ready in an hour.

"For what?" she asked, rising.

She had been sitting on the grass.

"To start, your Excellency," he replied.

"To start," she exclaimed, taken by surprise. "Whither, sir?"

"On the return journey. To the camp," he answered.

The blood rushed to her face. "To the camp?" she repeated. "But is the General going to start this morning? Now?"

"In an hour, madam."

"And leave the Waldgrave Rupert—and my servant?" she cried, in a voice of burning indignation. "Are they to be abandoned? It is impossible! I will see the General. Where is he," she continued impetuously.

"He is in the valley," the man replied.

"Then take me to him," she said, stepping forward. "I will speak to him. He cannot know." He has not thought."

But the officer stood silent, without offering to move. The Countess's eyes flashed. "Do you hear, sir?" she cried. "Lead on, if you please. I asked you to take me to him."

"I heard, madam," he replied in a low voice, "and I ask your pardon. But this is an army, and I am a part of it. I can take orders only from Gen. Tzerclas. I have received them, and I cannot go beyond them."

For a moment the Countess stood glaring at him, her face on fire with wrath and indignation. She had been so long used to command, she was of a nature so frank and imperious, that she trembled on the verge of an outburst that could only have destroyed the little dignity it was still possible for her to possess. In the nick of time her eyes met those of a group of officers who stood at a distance watching her. She thought she read amusement in their gaze, and a pride greater than that which had impelled her to anger came to her aid. She controlled herself by a mighty effort. The color left her cheeks as quickly as it had flown to them. She looked at the man coldly and disdainfully.

"True," she said. "you do well to remind me. It is not easy to remember that in war many things must give way. You may go, sir. I shall be ready."

But as she stood and saw her horses saddled her heart sank like lead. All the misery of her false position came home to her. She felt that now she was alone, indeed, and powerless. She was leaving behind her the only chance that remained of regaining her friends. She was going back to put herself more completely, if that were possible, in the General's hands. Yet she dared not resist! She dared not court defeat! As her only hope she had been kindled. The nearest group of soldiers—Tzerclas's staff, whose harsh voices and reckless laughter came to her ears at intervals—had their fire full a hundred paces away. For a moment she entertained the desperate idea that she might slip away, alone, or with her maid, and, passing from clump to clump, might gain the valley from which she had ascended, and, hiding in the wood, get somehow to Cassel. The smallest reflection showed her that the plan was not possible, and it was rejected as soon as formed. But a moment later she was tempted to wish that she had put it into effect. An officer made his appearance, with his hat in his hand and an air of haste, and wished to know, with the General's service, whether she could be ready in an hour.

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The Countess saw this; and though her heart ached for her friends, and her eyes often turned back in unavailing hope, she mounted with a serene brow. Her horses had been brought to the top of the hill, and she rode down by a path which had been discovered. When she had gone a league on the backward road she came on the foremost part of the captured convoy, which was immediately halted and drawn aside, that she might pass more conveniently and escape the noise and dust it occasioned.

Among the rest were three wagons laden with wounded. Awnings had been spread to veil them from the sun, and she was spared the sight of their sufferings. But their moans, groans and cries, as the wagons jolted and creaked over the rough road, drove the blood from her cheeks. She passed them quickly—they were many and she was one, and she could do nothing—and rode on, little thinking who lay under the awnings, or whose eyes followed her as she went.

### CHAPTER XXI.

AMONG THE WOUNDED.

When a man lies fettered at the bottom of a jolting wagon and unable to help himself; is made a pillow for wounded wretches, whose feverish struggles go near to stifling him; and when to these miseries are added the heat of a sultry night, thirst, and the near prospect of death, passion soon dies down. Anger gives place to pain and the chill of apprehension. The man begins to know himself again—forgets his enemies, thinks of his friends.

It was so with me. The General's back was not turned before I ceased to err out; and that gained me the one alleviation I had—that I was not gagged. They piled the wagon with bleeding, groaning men—of our side of course, for no quarter was given to the other—and I shuddered as each mangled wretch came in. Still I had my mouth free. If I could not move I could breathe and hear what passed around me. I could see the dark night sky lit up by the glare of the fires, or later, watch the stars shining coldly and indifferently down on this scene of pain and misery.

When the wagon was full they drove us, jolting and wailing, to an appointed place, and took out some, leaving only enough to cover the floor thickly. And then, ah me! the night began. That which at first had been an inconvenience became in time intolerable pain. The ropes cut into my flesh, the boards burned my back; we were so closely packed, and I was so tightly bound, I could not move a limb. Every moment the wounded cried for water, and those in pain wailed and lamented, while all night the wolves howled around the camp. In one corner a man whose eyes were injured babbled unceasingly of his mother and his home. Hour by hour, for the frenzy held him all night, he rolled his head and chattered and laughed! In the morning he died. We thanked God for it.

The peasant and the soldier sup the real miseries of war; the noble and the officer, whose it is to command in the field, but seldom, or rarely to lie wounded under the burning sun or through the freezing night, only taste them. A piece of arms falls; there is quarter for my lord and a pass and courtesy for my lady, but edge and point for the common herd. To risk all and get nothing—or a penny a day, unpaid—is the lot of most.

When morning at last dawned, I was half dead. My head seemed bursting; my hands were purple with the tightness of my bonds. Deep groans broke from me. I moved my eyes—the only things I could move—in an agony. Round me I heard the sick thanks to God. By slight grew and groans, and muttering words of hope. But the light helped me little. Where I lay, trussed like a fowl, I could see nothing except the sky—whence the sun would soon add to my miseries—and the heads of the two men who sat prepped against the wagon boards next to me.

I took one of these to be dead, for he had slipped down on his side, and the arm with which he had stayed himself against the floor of the wagon stood out stiff and stark. The other man had the comfort of the corner; there was a cloak under him and a pad behind him. But his head was sunk on his breast, and for a while I thought that he, too, was dead, a horrible dread that he would slide over on my face and stifle me. But he did not, and by and by, when the sun had risen, and I felt I could bear it no longer, he woke up and raised his fierce, white face and groaned.

It was Ludwig. He stared at me for a minute or two in a dazed, stupid fashion. Then he moved his leg and cried out with pain. After that he looked at me more sensibly, and by and by spoke.

"Donner, man!" he said. "What is it? You look like a ripe mulberry."

I tried to answer him, but my lips and throat were so parched and swollen I could only murmur. He saw my lips move, however, and guessed how it was with me.

"They have tied you up with a vengeance!" he said with a grim smile. "Here, Franzl! Wake up! Wake up, I say! Come, some one. Do you hear, you lazy knaves?" he continued in a hoarse croak. "When I am about again I will find some of you quicker heels!"

A man just risen came grumbling to the side of the wagon. Ludwig bade him climb in and loosen my bonds, and set me up against the side.

"And take away that carrion!" he added brutally. "Dead men pay no fares. That is better. Ay, give him some water. He will come round."

I did presently, though for a time the blood, flowing back to its old ways before restrained, caused me horrible pain, and my tongue, when I tried to thank him, seemed to be too large for my mouth. But I could now sit up, and stretch my limbs, and even raise my hands to my mouth. Hope returned. My thoughts flew back to Mary Wort. Her pale face and large eyes rose before my eyes, and filled them with tears. Then there was my lady. And the Waldgrave. Doubtless he, poor fellow, was dead. But the rest lived—lived, and would soon look to me, look to any one for help. On that I based my relief again. I shook off the pain and lethargy and despair of the night, and took up the burden of life. If my wits could save us, or, failing them, some happy accident, I would not be wanting. I had still a day or two, and all the chances of a journey.

Ludwig gave me some food and a drink from his flask. I thanked him again.

"You are a man," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "It was a pity you would knot your own rope. As for these chicken-hearted tremblers," he continued, squinting askance at our companions, "a flea to them! They call themselves soldiers and pule like women! Faugh! I am sick of them!"

For my part, the sights I saw from the wagon seemed more depressing. In every direction parties were moving, burying the dead, putting the wounded more at ease, and their inseparable, lamentable plunder. One division was at work driving the poor lowing cattle, already overdriven, back the way they had come, through the pass and up the river bank. Another was righting such of the wagons as had been overturned or dragging them out of the bather where they had been left, and there men were working furiously, shouting, swearing, spurning the dead. All showed that the General did not mean to linger, but would secure his booty by a timely retreat to his camp.

They came by and by and heeved our wagon and drew it out of the way, and presently took our place in the slow, creaking procession, and began to move up the pass. I looked everywhere for my lady, but could see nothing of her. The noise was prodigious, the dust terrible, the glare intolerable. I was thankful when some kind hand dragged a mattress from clump to clump, might gain the valley from which she had ascended, and, hiding in the wood, get somehow to Cassel. The smallest reflection showed her that the plan was not possible, and it was rejected as soon as formed. But a moment later she was tempted to wish that she had put it into effect. An officer made his appearance, with his hat in his hand and an air of haste, and wished to know, with the General's service, whether she could be ready in an hour.

"For what?" she asked, rising.

She had been sitting on the grass.

"To start, your Excellency," he replied.

"To start," she exclaimed, taken by surprise. "Whither, sir?"

"On the return journey. To the camp," he answered.

The blood rushed to her face. "To the camp?" she repeated. "But is the General going to start this morning? Now?"

"In an hour, madam."

"And leave the Waldgrave Rupert—and my servant?" she cried, in a voice of burning indignation. "Are they to be abandoned? It is impossible! I will see the General. Where is he," she continued impetuously.

"He is in the valley," the man replied.

"Then take me to him," she said, stepping forward. "I will speak to him. He cannot know. He has not thought."

But the officer stood silent, without offering to move. The Countess's eyes flashed. "Do you hear, sir?" she cried. "Lead on, if you please. I asked you to take me to him."

"I heard, madam," he replied in a low voice, "and I ask your pardon. But this is an army, and I am a part of it. I can take orders only from Gen. Tzerclas. I have received them, and I cannot go beyond them."

For a moment the Countess stood glaring at him, her face on fire with wrath and indignation. She had been so long used to command, she was of a nature so frank and imperious, that she trembled on the verge of an outburst that could only have destroyed the little dignity it was still possible for her to possess. In the nick of time her eyes met those of a group of officers who stood at a distance watching her. She thought she read amusement in their gaze, and a pride greater than that which had impelled her to anger came to her aid. She controlled herself by a mighty effort. The color left her cheeks as quickly as it had flown to them. She looked at the man coldly and disdainfully.

"True," she said, "you do well to remind me. It is not easy to remember that in war many things must give way. You may go, sir. I shall be ready."

But as she stood and saw her horses saddled her heart sank like lead. All the misery of her false position came home to her. She felt that now she was alone, indeed, and powerless. She was leaving behind her the only chance that remained of regaining her friends. She was going back to put herself more completely, if that were possible, in the General's hands. Yet she dared not resist! She dared not court defeat! As her only hope she had reserve now laid in her wits and the prestige of her rank and beauty, to lower that prestige by an unavailing struggle, by an unwomanly display would be to destroy at a blow half her defenses.

The Countess saw this; and though her heart ached for her friends, and her eyes often turned back in unavailing hope, she mounted with a serene brow. Her horses had been brought to the top of the hill, and she rode down by a path which had been discovered. When she had gone a league on the backward road she came on the foremost part of the captured convoy, which was immediately halted and drawn aside, that she might pass more conveniently and escape the noise and dust it occasioned.

Among the rest were three wagons laden with wounded. Awnings had been spread to veil them from the sun, and she was spared the sight of their sufferings. But their groans, moans and cries, as the wagons jolted and creaked over the rough road, drove the blood from her cheeks. She passed them quickly—they were many and she was one, and she could do nothing—and rode on, little thinking who lay under the awnings, or whose eyes followed her as she went.

### CHAPTER XXI.

AMONG THE WOUNDED.

When a man lies fettered at the bottom of a jolting wagon and unable to help himself; is made a pillow for wounded wretches, whose feverish struggles go near to stifling him; and when to these miseries are added the heat of a sultry night, thirst, and the near prospect of death, passion soon dies down. Anger gives place to pain and the chill of apprehension. The man begins to know himself again—forgets his enemies, thinks of his friends.

It was so with me. The General's back was not turned before I ceased to err out; and that gained me the one alleviation I had—that I was not gagged. They piled the wagon with bleeding, groaning men—of our side of course, for no quarter was given to the other—and I shuddered as each mangled wretch came in. Still I had my mouth free. If I could not move I could breathe and hear what passed around me. I could see the dark night sky lit up by the glare of the fires, or later, watch the stars shining coldly and indifferently down on this scene of pain and misery.

When the wagon was full they drove us, jolting and wailing, to an appointed place, and took out some, leaving only enough to cover the floor thickly. And then, ah me! the night began. That which at first had been an inconvenience became in time intolerable pain. The ropes cut into my flesh, the boards burned my back; we were so closely packed, and I was so tightly bound, I could not move a limb. Every moment the wounded cried for water, and those in pain wailed and lamented, while all night the wolves howled around the camp. In one corner a man whose eyes were injured babbled unceasingly of his mother and his home. Hour by hour, for the frenzy held him all night, he rolled his head and chattered and laughed! In the morning he died. We thanked God for it.

The peasant and the soldier sup the real miseries of war; the noble and the officer, whose it is to command in the field, but seldom, or rarely to lie wounded under the burning sun or through the freezing night, only taste them. A piece of arms falls; there is quarter for my lord and a pass and courtesy for my lady, but edge and point for the common herd. To risk all and get nothing—or a penny a day, unpaid—is the lot of most.

When morning at last dawned, I was half dead. My head seemed bursting; my hands were purple with the tightness of my bonds. Deep groans broke from me. I moved my eyes—the only things I could move—in an agony. Round me I heard the sick thanks to God. By slight grew and groans, and muttering words of hope. But the light helped me little. Where I lay, trussed like a fowl, I could see nothing except the sky—whence the sun would soon add to my miseries—and the heads of the two men who sat prepped against the wagon boards next to me.

I took one of these to be dead, for he had slipped down on his side, and the arm with which he had stayed himself against the floor of the wagon stood out stiff and stark. The other man had the comfort of the corner; there was a cloak under him and a pad behind him. But his head was sunk on his breast, and for a while I thought that he, too, was dead, a horrible dread that he would slide over on my face and stifle me. But he did not, and by and by, when the sun had risen, and I felt I could bear it no longer, he woke up and raised his fierce, white face and groaned.

It was Ludwig. He stared at me for a minute or two in a dazed, stupid fashion. Then he moved his leg and cried out with pain. After that he looked at me more sensibly, and by and by spoke.

"Donner, man!" he said. "What is it? You look like a ripe mulberry."

I tried to answer him, but my lips and throat were so parched and swollen I could only murmur. He saw my lips move, however, and guessed how it was with me.

"They have tied you up with a vengeance!" he said with a grim smile. "Here, Franzl! Wake up! Wake up, I say! Come, some one. Do you hear, you lazy knaves?" he continued in a hoarse croak. "When I am about again I will find some of you quicker heels!"

A man just risen came grumbling to the side of the wagon. Ludwig bade him climb in and loosen my bonds, and set me up against the side.

"And take away that carrion!" he added brutally. "Dead men pay no fares. That is better. Ay, give him some water. He will come round."

I did presently, though for a time the blood, flowing back to its old ways before restrained, caused me horrible pain, and my tongue, when I tried to thank him, seemed to be too large for my mouth. But I could now sit up, and stretch my limbs, and even raise my hands to my mouth. Hope returned. My thoughts flew back to Mary Wort. Her pale face and large eyes rose before my eyes, and filled them with tears. Then there was my lady. And the Waldgrave. Doubtless he, poor fellow, was dead. But the rest lived—lived, and would soon look to me, look to any one for help. On that I based my relief again. I shook off the pain and lethargy and despair of the night, and took up the burden of life. If my wits could save us, or, failing them, some happy accident, I would not be wanting. I had still a day or two, and all the chances of a journey.

Ludwig gave me some food and a drink from his flask. I thanked him again.

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