

"You cannot expect one to remember what happened in Washington five years ago. You know the administration changes every four years, and memories seldom carry back even so far as that."

"I had hoped that my most outspoken adoration would have left reminiscence that might outlast administration. I have not found forgetting so easy."

"Are you quite sure of that, Lord Donal?" asked the girl archly, closing her fan and giving him for the first time a full view of her face.

The young man seemed for a moment perplexed, but she went on, giving him little time for reflection, "Have your diplomatic duties taken you away from Washington?"

"Yes, to the other end of the earth. I am now in St. Petersburg, with ultimate hopes of Vienna, princess. I happened to be in London this week, and hearing you were to be here, I moved heaven and earth for an invitation."

"Which you obtained only to find yourself forgotten. How hollow this world is, isn't it?"

"Alas, yes! A man in my profession sees a good deal of the seamy side of life, and I fully believe that my rapidly lessening dependence on human veracity will be shattered by my superiors sending me to Constantinople. But let me find you a seat out of this crowd where we may talk of old times."

"I don't care so much about the past as I do about the present. Let us go up into that gallery, where you will point out to me the celebrities. I suppose you know them all, while I am an entire stranger to London society."

"That is a capital idea!" cried the young man enthusiastically. "Yes, I think I know most of the people here, at least by name. Ah, here comes the royal party! We shall just be in time to have a good look at them."

The band played the national anthem, and Lord Donal got two chairs, which he placed at the edge of the gallery, well hidden from the promenaders by spreading tropical plants.

"Oh, this is jolly!" cried Jennie, quite forgetting the dignity of a princess. "You told me why you came to the ball. Do you know why I am here?"

"On the remote chance of meeting me, whom you pretended to have forgotten," replied the young man audaciously.

"Of course," laughed Jennie. "But, aside from that, I came to see the costumes. You know we women are libelously said to dress for each other. Away from the world, in the Tyrol, I have little opportunity of seeing anything fine in the way of dress, and so I accepted the invitation of the duchess."

"Have you the invitation of the duchess with you?"

"Yes; I am going to take some notes on the back of it. Would you like to see it?" She handed him the letter and then leaned back in her chair, regarding him closely. The puzzled expression on his face deepened as he glanced over the invitation and saw that it was exactly what it purported to be. He gave the letter back to her, saying:

"So you are here to see the fashions. It is a subject I know little about; but, judging by effect, I should say that the Princess von Steinheimer has nothing to learn from any one present. If I may touch on a topic so personal, your costume is what they call a creation, is it not, princess?"

"It isn't bad," said the girl, looking down at her gown and then glancing up at him with merriment dancing in her eyes. The diplomat had his elbow resting on the balustrade, his head leaning on his hand, and quite oblivious to everything else, was gazing at her with such absorbed intentness that the girl blushed and cast down her eyes. The intense admiration in his look was undisguised. "Still," she rattled on somewhat breathlessly, "one gets many hints from others, and the creation of today is merely the old clothes of tomorrow. Invention has no vacation, so far as ladies' apparel is concerned. Take no thought of tomorrow, wherewithal ye shall be clothed," may have been a good motto for the court of Solomon, but it has little relation with that of Victoria."

"Solomon, if the saying is his, was hedging. He had many wives, you know."

"Well, as I was about to say, you must now turn your attention to the other guests and tell me who's who. I have already confessed my ignorance, and you promised to enlighten me."

The young man, with visible reluctance, directed his thoughts from the one to the many and named this person and that, while Jennie, with the pencil attached to her card, made cabalistic notes in shorthand, economizing thus both space and time. When at last she had all the information she desired, she leaned back in her chair with a little sigh of supreme content. Whatever might now betide, her mission was fulfilled if she could once get quietly away. The complete details of the season were at her fingers' ends. She closed her eyes for a moment to enjoy the satisfaction which success leaves in its train and when she opened them again found Lord Donal in his old posture, absorbed in the contemplation of her undeniable beauty.

"I see you are determined I shall have no difficulty in remembering you next time we meet," she said, with a smile, at the same time flushing slightly under his ardent gaze.

"I was just thinking," he replied, shifting his position a little, "that the five years which have dealt so hardly with me have left you five years younger."

"Age has many privileges, Lord Donal," she continued, laughing outright, "but I don't think you can yet lay claim to any of them. The pose of the prematurely old is not in the least borne out by your appearance, however hardly the girl you met in Washington dealt with you."

"Ah, princess, it is very easy for you to treat these serious matters lightly!

He laughs at scars who never felt a wound. Time, being, above all things, treacherous, often leaves the face untouched the more effectually to scar the heart. The hurt concealed is ever the most dangerous.

"I fancy it has been concealed so effectually that it is not as deep as you imagined."

"Princess, I will confess to you that the wound at Washington was as nothing to the one received in London."

"Yes; you told me you had been here for a week."

"The week has nothing to do with it. I have been here for a night—for two hours or three. I have lost count of time since I met you."

What reply the girl might have made to this speech, delivered with all the fervency of a man in thorough earnest, will never be known, for at that moment their tete-a-tete was interrupted by a messenger, who said:

"His excellency the Austrian ambassador begs to be permitted to pay his regards to the Princess von Steinheimer."

Lord Donal Stirling never took his eyes from the face of his companion, and he saw a quick pallor overspread it. He leaned forward and whispered:

"I know the ambassador. If you do not wish to meet him, I will intercept him."

Jennie rose slowly to her feet, and, looking with a calmness she was far from feeling at the young man, said coldly:

"Why should I not wish to meet the ambassador of my adopted country?"

"I know of no reason; quite the contrary, for he must be an old friend of yours, having been your guest at the Schloss Steinheimer a year ago."

He stepped back as he said this, and Jennie had difficulty in suppressing the gasp of dismay with which she received his disquieting information; but she stood her ground without wincing. She was face to face with the crisis she had foreseen—the coming of one who knew the princess. Next instant the aged statesman was bending over her outstretched hand, which in courtly fashion the old man raised to his lips.

"I am delighted to have the privilege of welcoming you to this gloomy old city, Princess von Steinheimer, which you illumine with your presence. Do you stay long in London?"

"The period of illumination is short, your excellency. I leave for Paris tomorrow."

"So soon, without even visiting the embassy? I am distressed to hear of so speedy a desertion, and yet, knowing the charms of the Schloss Steinheimer, I can hardly wonder at your wish to return there. The prince, I suppose, is as devoted as ever to the chase. I must censure his highness next time we meet for not coming with you to London. Then I am sure you would have staid longer with us."

"The prince is a model husband, your excellency," said Jennie, with a sly glance at Lord Donal, whose expression of uncertainty increased as this colloquy went on, "and he would have come to London without a murmur had his wife been selfish enough to tear him away from his beloved Meran."

"A model husband!" said the ancient count, with an unctuous chuckle. "So few of us excel in that respect, but there is this to be said in our exculpation—so few have been matrimonially so fortunate as Prince von Steinheimer. I have never ceased to long for a repetition of the charming visit I paid to your delightful home."

"If your excellency but knew how welcome you are, your visits would not have such long intervals between."

"It is most kind of you, princess, to cheer an old man's heart by such gracious words. It is our misfortune that affairs of state chain us to our pillar, and indeed diplomacy seems to become more difficult as the years go on, because we have to contend with the genius of rising young men like Lord Donal Stirling here, who are more than a match for old dogs that find it impossible to learn new tricks."

"Indeed, your excellency," said his lordship, speaking for the first time since the ambassador began, "the very

ber now that you were expecting them when I was there. So they have arrived safely, I hope, but I think you had ordered an incredible number to be certain of having at least one or two serviceable."

"No, only a dozen, and they all came through without damage."

"You young people, you young people!" murmured the ambassador, bending again over the hand presented him. "What unheard of things you do!"

And so the old man shuffled away, leaving many compliments behind him, evidently not having the slightest suspicion that he had met any one but the person he supposed himself addressing, for his eyesight was not of the best, and an ambassador meets many fair and distinguished women.

The girl sat down with calm dignity, while Lord Donal dropped into his chair, an expression of complete mystification on his clear cut, honest face. Jennie slowly fanned herself, for the heat made itself felt at that elevated situation, and for a few moments nothing was said by either. The young man was the first to break silence.

"Should I be so fortunate as to get an invitation to the Schloss Steinheimer, may I hope that a red rocking chair will be allotted to me? I have not sat in one since I was in the States."

"Yes, one for you, two for the ambassador," said Jennie, with a laugh. "I should like further to flatter myself that your double generosity to the ambassador arises solely from the dignity of his office and is not in any way personal."

"I am very fond of ambassadors. They are courteous gentlemen, who seem to have less distrust than is exhibited by some not so exalted."

"Distrust! You surely cannot mean that I have distrusted you, princess?"

"Oh, I was speaking generally," replied Jennie airily. "You seem to seek a personal application."

"I admit, princess, that several times this evening I have been completely at sea."

"And, what is worse, Lord Donal, you have shown it, which is the one unforgivable fault in diplomacy."

"You are quite right. If I had you to teach me, I would be an ambassador within the next five years, or at least a minister."

The girl looked at him over the top of her fan, covert merriment lurking in her eyes.

"When you visit Schloss Steinheimer, you might ask the prince if he objects to my giving you lessons."

Here was another interruption, and the announcement was made that the United States ambassador desired to renew his acquaintance with the Princess von Steinheimer. Lord Donal made use of an impatient exclamation more emphatic than he intended to give utterance to, but on looking at his companion in alarm he saw in her glance a quick flash of gratitude as unmistakable as if she had spoken her thanks. It was quite evident that the girl had no desire to meet his excellency, which is not to be wondered at, as she had already encountered him three times in her capacity of journalist. He not only knew the Princess von Steinheimer, but he knew Jennie Baxter as well.

She leaned back in her chair and said wearily:

"I seem to be having somewhat even-tempered of diplomatic society this evening. Are you acquainted with the American ambassador also, Lord Donal?"

"Yes," cried the young man, springing to his feet. "He was a prominent politician at Washington while I was there. He is an excellent man, and I shall have no difficulty in making your excuses to him if you don't wish to meet him."

"Thank you so much. You have now an opportunity of retrieving your diplomatic reputation if you can postpone the interview without offending him."

Lord Donal departed with alacrity, and the moment he was gone all appearance of languor vanished from Miss Jennie Baxter.

"Now is my chance," she whispered to herself. "I must be in my carriage before he returns."

Eager as she was to be gone, she knew that she should display no haste. Expecting to find a stair at the other end of the gallery, she sought for it, but found none. Filled with apprehension that she would meet Lord Donal coming up, she had difficulty in timing her footsteps to the slow measure that was necessary. She reached the bottom of the stair in safety and unimpeded, but once on the main floor a new problem presented itself. Nothing would attract more attention than a young and beautiful lady walking the long distance between the gallery end of the room and the entrance stairway entirely alone and unattended. She stood there hesitating, wondering whether she could venture on finding a quiet side exit, which she was sure must exist in this large house, when, to her dismay, she found Lord Donal again at her side, rather breathless, as if he had been hurrying in search of her. His brows were knit, and there was an anxious expression on his face.

"I must have a word with you alone," he whispered. "Let me conduct you to this alcove under the gallery."

"No; I am tired. I am going home."

"I quite understand that, but you must come with me for a moment."

"Must!" she said, with a suggestion of defiance in her tone.

"Yes," he answered gravely. "I wish to be of assistance to you. I think you will need it."

For a moment she met his unflinching gaze steadily; then her glance fell, and she said in a low voice, "Very well."

When they reached the alcove, she inquired rather quaveringly—for she saw something had happened which had finally settled all the young man's doubts—"Is it the American ambassador?"

"No; there was little trouble there. He expects to meet you later in the

evening. But a telegraphic message has come from Meran, signed by the Princess von Steinheimer, which expresses a hope that the ball will be a success and reiterates the regret of her highness that she could not be present. Luckily, this communication has not been shown to the duchess. I told the duke, who read it to me, knowing I had been with you all the evening, that it was likely a practical joke on the part of the prince, but the duke, who is rather a serious person, does not take kindly to that theory, and if he knew the prince he would dismiss it as absurd, which it is. I have asked him not to show the telegram to any one; so there is a little time for considering what had best be done."

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Next instant the aged statesman was bending over her outstretched hand.



"My lord, excuse me."

a nervous little laugh bordering closely on the hysterical. "I was about to make my way out by some private exit if I could find one."

"That would be impossible, and the attempt might lead to unexpected complications. I suggest that you take my arm and that you bid farewell to her grace, pleading fatigue as the reason for your early departure. Then I will see you to your carriage, and when I return I shall endeavor to get that unlucky telegram from the duke by telling him I should like to find out whether it is a hoax or not. He will have forgotten about it most likely in the morning. Therefore all you have to do is to keep up your courage for a few moments longer until you are safe in your carriage."

"You are very kind," she murmured, with downcast eyes.

"You are very clever, my princess, but the odds against you were tremendous. Some time you must tell me why you risked it."

She made no reply, but took his arm, and together they sauntered through the rooms until they found the duchess, when Jennie took her leave of the hostess with a demure dignity that left nothing to be desired. All went well until they reached the head of the stair, when the duke, an ominous frown on his brow, hurried after them and said:

"My lord, excuse me."

Lord Donal turned with an ill concealed expression of impatience, but he was helpless, for he feared his host might not have the good sense to avoid a scene even in his own hall. Had it been the duchess all would have been well, for she was a lady of infinite tact, but the duke, as he had said, was a stupid man, who needed the constant eye of his wife upon him to keep him from blundering. The young man whispered: "Keep right on until you are in your carriage. I shall ask my man here to call it for you; but please don't drive away until I come."

A sign brought a serving man up the stair.

"Call the carriage of the Princess von Steinheimer," said his master. Then, as the lady descended the stair, Lord Donal turned, with no very thankful feeling in his heart, to hear what his host had to say.

"Lord Donal, the American ambassador says that woman is not the Princess von Steinheimer, whom he has met several times in London. He cannot remember her name. Now, who is she, and how did you come to meet her?"

"My lord duke, it never occurred to me to question the identity of guests I met under your hospitable roof. I knew the princess five years ago in Washington, before she was married. I have not seen her in the interval, but until you showed me the telegraphic message there was no question in my mind regarding her."

"But the American ambassador is positive."

"Then he has more confidence in his eyesight than I have. If such a question, like international difficulties, is to be settled by the embassies, let us refer it to Austria, who held a long conversation with the lady in my presence. Your excellency," he continued to the Austrian ambassador, who was hovering near, waiting to speak to his host, "my lord duke has some doubt that the lady who has just departed is the Princess von Steinheimer. You spoke with her and can therefore decide with authority, for his lordship seems disinclined to accept my testimony."

"Not the princess? Nonsense! I know her very well indeed, and a most charming lady she is. I hope to be her guest again before many months are past."

"There, my lord duke, you see everything is as it should be. If you will give me that stupid telegram, I will make some quiet inquiries about it. Meanwhile the less said the better. I will see the American ambassador and

(Continued on Page 8.)