

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE END OF THE CONGRESS OF BADEN.

Mention has been made of an elderly young person from Ireland, engaged to Mme. la Duchesse d'Ivry as companion and teacher of English for her little daughter. When Miss O'Grady, as she did sometime afterward, quitted Mme. d'Ivry's family, she spoke with great freedom regarding the behavior of that duchess, and recounted horrors which she, the latter, had committed. A number of the most terrific anecdotes issued from the lips of the indignant miss, whose volubility Lord Kew was obliged to check, not choosing that his countess, with whom he was paying a bridal visit to Paris, should hear such dreadful legends. It was there that Miss O'Grady, finding herself in misfortune, and reading of Lord Kew's arrival at the Hôtel Bristol, waited upon his lordship and the Countess of Kew, begging them to take tickets in a raffle for an invaluable ivory writing desk, sole relic of her former prosperity, which she proposed to give her friends the chance of acquiring; in fact, Miss O'Grady lived for some years on the produce of repeated raffles for this beautiful desk; many religious ladies of the Faubourg St. Germain taking an interest in her misfortunes, and alleviating them by the simple lottery system. Protestants as well as Catholics were permitted to take shares in Miss O'Grady's raffles; and Lord Kew, good-natured then as always, purchased so many tickets that the contrite O'Grady informed him of a transaction which had nearly affected his happiness, and in which she took a not very creditable share. "Had I known your lordship's real character," Miss O'G. was pleased to say, "no tortures would have induced me to do an act for which I have undergone penance. It was that black-hearted woman, my lord, who maligned your lordship to me; that woman whom I called friend once, but who is the most false, depraved, and dangerous of her sex." In this way do ladies' companions sometimes speak of ladies when quarrels separate them, when confidential attendants are dismissed, bearing away family secrets in their minds, and revenge in their hearts.

The day after Miss Ethel's feats at the assembly, old Lady

Kew went over to advise her granddaughter, and to give her a little timely warning about the impropriety of flirtations; above all, with such men as are to be found at watering-places, persons who are never seen elsewhere in society. "Remark the peculiarities of Kew's temper, who never flies into a passion like you and me, my dear," said the old lady (being determined to be particularly gracious and cautious); "when once angry he remains so, and is so obstinate that it is almost impossible to coax him into good-humor. It is much better, my love, to be like us," continued the old lady, "to fly out in a rage and have it over, but *que voulez-vous?* Such is Frank's temper, and we must manage him." So she went on, backing her advice by a crowd of examples drawn from the family history; showing how Kew was like his grandfather, her own poor husband; still more like his late father, Lord Walham, between whom and his mother there had been differences, chiefly brought on by my Lady Walham of course, which had ended in the almost total estrangement of mother and son. Lady Kew then administered her advice, and told her stories, with Ethel alone for a listener; and in a most edifying manner, she besought Miss Newcome to *ménager* Lord Kew's susceptibilities, as she valued her own future comfort in life, as well as the happiness of a most amiable man, of whom, if properly managed, Ethel might make what she pleased. We have said Lady Kew managed everybody, and that most of the members of the family allowed themselves to be managed by her ladyship.

Ethel, who had permitted her grandmother to continue her sententious advice, while she herself sat tapping her feet on the floor, and performing the most rapid variations of that air which is called the "Devil's Tattoo," burst out, at length, to the elder lady's surprise, with an outbreak of indignation, a flushing face, and a voice quivering with anger.

"This most amiable man," she cried out, "that you design for me; I know everything about this most amiable man, and thank you and my family for the present you make me! For the past year, what have you been doing? Every one of you! my father, my brother, and you yourself have been filling my ears with cruel reports against a poor boy, whom you chose to depict as everything that was dissolute and wicked, when there was nothing against him; nothing, but that he was poor. Yes, you yourself, grandmamma, have told me many and many a time that Clive Newcome was not a fit companion for us;

warned me against his bad courses, and painted him as extravagant, unprincipled, I don't know how bad. How bad! I know how good he is; how upright, generous, and truth-telling: though there was not a day until lately that Barnes did not make some wicked story against him—Barnes, who, I believe, is bad himself, like—like other young men. Yes, I am sure there was something about Barnes in that newspaper which my father took away from me. And you come and you lift up your hands and shake your head, because I dance with one gentleman or another. You tell me I am wrong; mamma has told me so this morning. Barnes, of course, has told me so, and you bring me Frank as a pattern, and tell me to love and honor and obey him! Look here," and she drew out a paper and put it into Lady Kew's hands. "Here is Kew's history, and I believe it is true; yes, I am sure it is true."

The old dowager lifted her eye-glass to her black eyebrow, and read a paper written in English, and bearing no signature, in which many circumstances of Lord Kew's life were narrated for poor Ethel's benefit. It was not a worse life than that of a thousand young men of pleasure, but there was Kew's many misdeeds set down in order; such a catalogue as we laugh at when Leporello trolls it, and sings his master's victories in France, Italy, and Spain. Mme. d'Ivry's name was not mentioned in this list, and Lady Kew felt sure that the outrage came from her.

With real ardor Lady Kew sought to defend her grandson from some of the attacks here made against him; and showed Ethel that the person who could use such means of calumniating him would not scruple to resort to falsehood in order to effect her purpose.

"Her purpose," cries Ethel. "How do you know it is a woman?" Lady Kew lapsed into generalities. She thought the handwriting was a woman's—at least it was not likely that a man should think of addressing an anonymous letter to a young lady, and so wreaking his hatred upon Lord Kew. "Besides, Frank has had no rivals—except—except one young gentleman who has carried his paint-boxes to Italy," says Lady Kew. "You don't think your dear Colonel's son would leave such a piece of mischief behind him? You must act, my dear," continued her ladyship, "as if this letter had never been written at all; the person who wrote it no doubt will watch you. Of course we are too proud to allow him to see that we

are wounded; and pray, pray do not think of letting poor Frank know a word about this horrid transaction."

"Then the letter is true!" burst out Ethel. "You know it is true, grandmamma, and that is why you would have me keep it a secret from my cousin; besides," she added, with a little hesitation, "your caution comes too late, Lord Kew has seen the letter."

"You fool," screamed the old lady, "you were not so mad as to show it to him?"

"I am sure the letter is true," Ethel said, rising up very haughtily. "It is not by calling me bad names that your ladyship will disprove it. Keep them, if you please, for my Aunt Julia; she is sick and weak, and can't defend herself. I do not choose to bear abuse from you, or lectures from Lord Kew. He happened to be here a short while since, when the letter arrived. He had been good enough to come to preach me a sermon on his own account. He to find fault with my actions!" cried Miss Ethel, quivering with wrath, and clenching the luckless paper in her hand. "He to accuse me of levity, and to warn me against making improper acquaintances! He began his lectures too soon. I am not a lawful slave yet, and prefer to remain unmolested—at least as long as I am free."

"And you told Frank all this, Miss Newcome, and you showed him that letter?" said the old lady.

"The letter was actually brought to me while his lordship was in the midst of his sermon," Ethel replied. "I read it as he was making his speech," she continued, gathering anger and scorn as she recalled the circumstances of the interview. "He was perfectly polite in his language. He did not call me a fool or use a single other bad name. He was good enough to advise me and to make such virtuous, pretty speeches that, if he had been a bishop, he could not have spoken better; and, as I thought the letter was a nice commentary on his lordship's sermon, I gave it to him. I gave it to him," cried the young woman, "and much good may it do him! I don't think my Lord Kew will preach to me again for some time."

"I don't think he will indeed," said Lady Kew, in a hard, dry voice. "You don't know what you may have done. Will you be pleased to ring the bell and order my carriage? I congratulate you on having performed a most charming morning's work."

Ethel made her grandmother a very stately courtesy. I pity Lady Julia's condition when her mother reached home.

All who know Lord Kew may be pretty sure that in that unlucky interview with Ethel, to which the young lady had just alluded, he said no single word to her that was not kind, and just, and gentle. Considering the relation between them, he thought himself justified in remonstrating with her as to the conduct which she chose to pursue, and in warning her against acquaintances of whom his own experience had taught him the dangerous character. He knew Mme. d'Ivry and her friends so well that he would not have his wife-elect a member of their circle. He could not tell Ethel what he knew of those women and their history. She chose not to understand his hints—did not, very likely, comprehend them. She was quite young, and the stories of such lives as theirs had never been told before her. She was indignant at the surveillance which Lord Kew exerted over her, and the authority which he began to assume. At another moment, and in a better frame of mind, she would have been thankful for his care, and very soon and ever after she did justice to his many admirable qualities—his frankness, honesty, and sweet temper. Only her high spirit was in perpetual revolt at this time against the bondage in which her family strove to keep her. The very worldly advantages of the position which they offered her served but to chafe her the more. Had her proposed husband been a young prince, with a crown to lay at her feet, she had been yet more indignant, very likely, and more rebellious. Had Kew's younger brother been her suitor, or Kew in his place, she had been not unwilling to follow her parents' wishes. Hence the revolt in which she was engaged—the wayward freaks and outbreaks her haughty temper indulged in. No doubt she saw the justice of Lord Kew's reproofs. That self-consciousness was not likely to add to her good-humor. No doubt she was sorry for having shown Lord Kew the letter the moment after she had done that act, of which the poor young lady could not calculate the consequences that were now to ensue.

Lord Kew, on glancing over the letter, at once divined the quarter whence it came. The portrait drawn of him was not unlike, as our characters described by those who hate us are not unlike. He had passed a reckless youth; indeed he was sad and ashamed of that past life; longed, like the poor prodigal, to return to better courses, and had embraced eagerly the

chance afforded him of a union with a woman young, virtuous, and beautiful, against whom and against Heaven he hoped to sin no more. If we have told or hinted at more of his story than will please the ear of modern conventionalism, I beseech the reader to believe that the writer's purpose at least is not dishonest, nor unkindly. The young gentleman hung his head with sorrow over that sad detail of his life and its follies. What would he have given to be able to say to Ethel, "This is not true!"

His reproaches to Miss Newcome, of course, were at once stopped by this terrible assault on himself. The letter had been put in the Baden post-box, and so had come to its destination. It was in a disguised handwriting. Lord Kew could form no idea even of the sex of the scribe. He put the envelope in his pocket, when Ethel's back was turned. He examined the paper when he left her. He could make little of the superscription or of the wafer which had served to close the note. He did not choose to caution Ethel as to whether she should burn the letter or divulge it to her friends. He took his share of the pain, as a boy at school takes his flogging, stoutly and in silence.

When he saw Ethel again, which he did in an hour's time, the generous young gentleman held his hand out to her. "My dear," he said, "if you had loved me you never would have shown me that letter." It was his only reproof. After that he never again reproved or advised her.

Ethel blushed. "You are very brave and generous, Frank," she said, bending her head, "and I am captious and wicked." He felt the hot tear dropping on his hand from his cousin's downcast eyes.

He kissed her little hand. Lady Ann, who was in the room with her children when these few words passed between the two in a very low tone, thought it was a reconciliation. Ethel knew it was a renunciation on Kew's part—she never liked him so much as at that moment. The young man was too modest and simple to guess himself what the girl's feelings were. Could he have told them, his fate and hers might have been changed.

"You must not allow our kind letter-writing friend," Lord Kew continued, "to fancy we are hurt. We must walk out this afternoon, and we must appear very good friends."

"Yes, always, Kew," said Ethel, holding out her hand again.

The next minute her cousin was at the table, carving roast fowls and distributing the portions to the hungry children.

The assembly of the previous evening had been one of those which the *fermier de jeux* at Baden beneficently provides for the frequenters of the place, and now was to come off a much more brilliant entertainment, in which poor Clive, who is far into Switzerland by this time, was to have taken a share. The bachelors had agreed to give a ball, one of the last entertainments of the season, a dozen or more of them had subscribed the funds, and we may be sure Lord Kew's name was at the head of the list, as it was of any list, of any scheme, whether of charity or fun. The English were invited, and the Russians were invited; the Spaniards and Italians, Poles, Prussians, and Hebrews; all the motley frequenters of the place, and the warriors in the Duke of Baden's army. Unlimited supper was set in the restaurant. The dancing-room glittered with extra lights, and a profusion of cut paper flowers decorated the festive scene. Everybody was present; those crowds with whom our story has nothing to do, and those two or three groups of persons who enact minor or greater parts in it. Mme. d'Ivry came in a dress of stupendous splendor, even more brilliant than that in which Miss Ethel had figured at the last assembly. If the Duchess intended to *écraser* Miss Newcome by the superior magnificence of her toilet, she was disappointed. Miss Newcome wore a plain white frock on the occasion and resumed, Mme. d'Ivry said, her rôle of ingénue for that night.

During the brief season in which gentlemen enjoyed the favor of Mary Queen of Scots, that wandering sovereign led them through all the paces and vagaries of a regular passion. As in a fair, where time is short and pleasures numerous, the master of the theatrical booth shows you a tragedy, a farce, and a pantomime, all in a quarter of an hour, having a dozen new audiences to witness his entertainments in the course of the forenoon; so this lady with her platonic lovers went through the complete dramatic course—tragedies of jealousy, pantomimes of rapture, and farces of parting. There were billets on one side and the other; hints of a fatal destiny, and a ruthless lynx-eyed tyrant, who held a demoniac grasp over the Duchess by means of certain secrets which he knew; there were regrets that we had not known each other sooner; why were we brought out of our convent and sacrificed to M. le Duc? There were frolic interchanges of fancy and poesy;

pretty *bouderies*; sweet reconciliations; yawns finally—and separation. Adolphe went out and Alphonse came in. It was the new audience; for which the bell rang, the band played, and the curtain rose; and the tragedy, comedy, and farce were repeated.

Those Greenwich performers who appear in the theatrical pieces above mentioned make a great deal more noise than your stationary tragedians; and if they have to denounce a villain, to declare a passion, or to threaten an enemy, they roar, stamp, shake their fists, and brandish their sabers, so that every man who sees the play has surely a full pennyworth for his penny. Thus Mme. la Duchesse d'Ivry perhaps a little exaggerated her heroine's parts; liking to strike her audiences quickly, and also to change them often. Like good performers, she flung herself heart and soul into the business of the stage, and was what she acted. She was Phèdre, and if, in the first part of the play, she was uncommonly tender to Hippolyte, in the second she hated him furiously. She was Medea, and if Jason was *volage*, woe to Creusa! Perhaps our poor Lord Kew had taken the first character in a performance with Mme. d'Ivry, for his behavior in which part it was difficult enough to forgive him; but when he appeared at Baden the affianced husband of one of the most beautiful young creatures in Europe—when his relative scorned Mme. d'Ivry—no wonder she was maddened and enraged, and would have recourse to revenge, steel, poison.

There was in the Duchess' court a young fellow from the south of France, whose friends had sent him to *faire son droit* at Paris, where he had gone through the usual course of pleasures and studies of the young inhabitants of the Latin Quarter. He had at one time exalted republican opinions, and had fired his shot with distinction at St. Méri. He was a poet of some little note—a book of his lyrics, "*Les Râles d'un Asphyxié*," having made a sensation at the time of its appearance. He drank great quantities of absinthe of a morning, smoked incessantly, played roulette whenever he could get a few pieces, contributed to a small journal, and was especially great in his hatred of *l'infâme Angleterre*. *Delenda est Carthago* was tattooed beneath his shirt-sleeve. Fifine and Clarisse, young milliners of the students' district, had punctured this terrible motto on his manly right arm. *Le leopard*, emblem of England, was his aversion; he shook his fist at the caged monster in the Garden of Plants. He desired to have "Here lies an