

## THE SEVENTH DAY — *Continued*

### AT STUBBENKAMMER

I BELIEVE I have somewhere remarked that Charlotte was not the kind of person one could ever tickle. She was also the last person in the world to whom most people would want to say Bo. The effect on her of this Bo was alarming. She started up as though she had been struck, and then stood as one turned to stone.

Brosy jumped up as if to protect her.

Mrs. Harvey-Browne looked really frightened, and gasped 'It is the old man again — an escaped lunatic — how very unpleasant!'

'No, no,' I hurriedly explained, 'it is the Professor.'

'*The Professor?* What, never the *Professor?* What, *the* Professor? Brosy — Brosy' — she leaned over and seized his coat in an agony of haste — 'never breathe it's the old man I've been talking about — never breathe it — it's Professor Nieberlein himself!'

'*What?*' exclaimed Brosy, flushing all over his face.

But the Professor took no notice of any of us, for he was diligently kissing Charlotte. He kissed her first on one cheek, then he kissed her on the other cheek, then he pulled her ears, then he tickled her under the chin, and he beamed upon her all the while with such an uninterrupted radiance that the coldest heart must have glowed only to see it.

'So here I meet thee, little treasure?' he cried. 'Here once more thy twitter falls upon my ears? I knew at once thy little chirp. I heard it above all the drinking noises. "Come, come," I said to myself, "if that is not the little Lot!" And chirping the self-same tune I know of old, in the beautiful English tongue: Turn not your back on a creature, turn not your back. Only on the old husband one turns the pretty back — what? Fie, fie, the naughty little Lot!'

I protest I never saw a stranger sight than this of Charlotte being toyed with. And the rigidity of her!

'How *charming* the simple German ways are,' cried Mrs. Harvey-Browne in a great flutter to me while the toying was going on. She was so torn by horror at what she had said and by rapture at meeting the Professor, that she hardly knew what she was doing. 'It really does one good to be given a peep at genuine family emotions. Delightful Professor. You heard what he said to the Duke after he had gone all the way to Bonn on purpose to see him? And my dear Frau X., *such* a Duke!' And she whispered the name in



my ear as though it were altogether too great to be said aloud.

I conceded by a nod that he was a very superior duke; but what the Professor said to him I never heard, for at that moment Charlotte dropped back into her chair and the Professor immediately scrambled (I fear there is no other word, he did scramble) into the next one to her, which was Brosy's.

'Will you kindly present me?' said Brosy to Charlotte, standing reverential and bare-headed before the great man.

'Ah, I know you, my young friend, already,' said the Professor genially. 'We have just been admiring Nature together.'

At this the bishop's wife blushed, deeply, thoroughly, a thing I suppose she had not done for years, and cast a supplicating look at Charlotte, who sat rigid with her eyes on her plate. Brosy blushed too and bowed profoundly. 'I cannot tell you, sir, how greatly honoured I feel at being allowed to make your acquaintance,' he said.

'Tut, tut,' said the Professor. 'Lottchen, present me to these ladies.'

What, he did not remember me? What, after the memorable evening in Berlin? I know of few things more wholly grievous than to have a celebrated connection who forgets he has ever seen you.

'I must apologise to you, madam,' he said to the bishop's wife, 'for taking a seat at your table after all.'

'Oh, Professor ——' murmured Mrs. Harvey-Browne.

'But you will perhaps forgive my joining a party of which my wife is a member.'

'Oh, Professor, do pray believe ——'

'I know a Brown,' he continued; 'in England there is a Brown I know. He is of a great skill in card-tricks. Hold — I know another Brown — nay, I know several. Relations, no doubt, of yours, madam?'

'No, sir, our name is *Harvey-Browne*.'

'*Ach so*. I understood Brown. So it is Harvey. Yes, yes; Harvey made the excellent sauce. I eat it daily with my fish. Madam, a public benefactor.'

'Sir, we are not related. We are the *Harvey-Brownes*.'

'What, you are both Harveys and Browns, and yet not related to either Browns or Harveys? Nay, but that is a problem to split the head.'

'My husband is the Bishop of Babbacombe. Perhaps you have heard of him, Professor. He too is literary. He annotates.'

'In any case, madam, his wife speaks admirable German,' said the Professor, with a little bow. 'And this lady?' he asked, turning to me.

'Why, I am Charlotte's cousin,' I said, no longer able to hide my affliction at the rapid way in which he had forgotten me, 'and accordingly yours. Do you not remember I met you last winter in Berlin at a party at the Hofmeyers?'

'Of course — of course. That is to say, I fear, of course not. I have no memory at all for things



of importance. But one can never have too many little cousins, can one, young man? Sit thee down next to me — then shall I be indeed a happy man, with my little wife on one side and my little cousin on the other. So — now we are comfortable; and when my coffee comes I shall ask for nothing more. Young man, when you marry, see to it that your wife has many nice little cousins. It is very important. As for my not remembering thee, he went on, putting one arm round the back of my chair, while the other was round the back of Charlotte's, 'be not offended, for I tell thee that the day after I married my Lot here, I fell into so great an abstraction that I started for a walking tour in the Alps with some friends I met, and for an entire week she passed from my mind. It was at Lucerne. So completely did she pass from it that I omitted to tell her I was going or bid her farewell. I went. Dost thou remember, Lottchen? I came to myself on the top of Pilatus a week after our wedding day. "What ails thee, man?" said my comrades, for I was disturbed. "I must go down at once," I cried; "I have forgotten something." "Bah! you do not need your umbrella up here," they said, for they knew I forget it much. "It is not my umbrella that I have left behind," I cried, "it is my wife." They were surprised, for I had forgotten to tell them I had a wife. And when I got down to Lucerne, there was the poor Lot quite offended.' And he pulled her nearest ear and laughed till his spectacles grew dim.

'Delightful,' whispered Mrs. Harvey-Browne to her son. 'So natural.'

Her son never took his eyes off the Professor, ready to pounce on the first word of wisdom and assimilate it, as a hungry cat might sit ready for the mouse that unaccountably delays.

'Ah yes,' sighed the Professor, stretching out his legs under the table and stirring the coffee the waiter had set before him, 'never forget, young man, that the only truly important thing in life is women. Little round, soft women. Little purring pussy-cats. Eh, Lot? Some of them will not always purr, will they, little Lot? Some of them mew much, some of them scratch, some of them have days when they will only wave their naughty little tails in anger. But all are soft and pleasant, and add much grace to the fireside.'

'How true,' murmured Mrs. Harvey-Browne in a rapture, 'how very, very true. So, so different from Nietzsche.'

'What, thou art silent, little treasure?' he continued, pinching Charlotte's cheek. 'Thou lovest not the image of the little cats?'

'No,' said Charlotte; and the word was jerked up red-hot from an interior manifestly molten.

'Well, then, pass me those strawberries that blink so pleasantly from their bed of green, and while I eat pour out of thy dear heart all that it contains concerning pussies, which interest thee greatly as I well know, and all else that it contains and has contained since last I saw thee. For it is



long since I heard thy voice, and I have missed thee much. Art thou not my dearest wife?’

Clearly it was time for me to get up and remove the Harvey-Brownes out of earshot. I prepared to do so, but at the first movement the arm along the back of the chair slid down and gripped hold of me.

‘Not so restless, not so restless, little cousin,’ said the Professor, smiling rosily. ‘Did I not tell thee I am happy so? And wilt thou mar the happiness of a good old man?’

‘But you have Charlotte, and you must wish to talk to her——’

‘Certainly do I wish it. But talking to Charlotte excludeth not the encircling of Elizabeth. And have I not two arms?’

‘I want to go and show Mrs. Harvey-Browne the view from the cliff,’ I said, appalled at the thought of what Charlotte, when she did begin to speak, would probably say.

‘Tut, tut,’ said the Professor, gripping me tighter, ‘we are very well so. The contemplation of virtuous happiness is at least as edifying for this lady as the contemplation of water from a cliff.’

‘Delightful originality,’ murmured Mrs. Harvey-Browne.

‘Madam, you flatter me,’ said the Professor, whose ears were quick.

‘Oh no, Professor, indeed, it is not flattery.’

‘Madam, I am the more obliged.’

‘We have so long wished we could meet you.

My son spent the whole of last summer in Bonn trying to do so——’

‘Waste of time, waste of time, madam.’

‘—and all in vain. And this year we were both there before coming up here and did all we could, but also unfortunately in vain. It really seems as if Providence had expressly led us to this place to-day.’

‘Providence, madam, is continually leading people to places, and then leading them away again. I, for instance, am to be led away again from this one with great rapidity, for I am on foot and must reach a bed by nightfall. Here there is nothing to be had.’

‘Oh you must come back to Binz with us,’ cried Mrs. Harvey-Browne. ‘The steamer leaves in an hour, and I am sure room could be found for you in our hotel. My son would gladly give you his, if necessary; he would feel only too proud if you would take it, would you not, Brosy?’

‘Madam, I am overwhelmed by your amiability. You will, however, understand that I cannot leave my wife. Where I go she comes too—is it not so, little treasure? I am only waiting to hear her plans to arrange mine accordingly. I have no luggage. I am very movable. My night attire is on my person, beneath the attire appropriate to the day. In one pocket of my mantle I carry an extra pair of socks. In another my handkerchiefs, of which there are two. And my sponge, damp and cool, is embedded in the crown of my hat. Thus, madam, I am of a remarkable independence.



Its one restriction is the necessity of finding a shelter daily before dark. Tell me, little Lot, is there no room for the old husband here with thee?' And there was something so sweet in his smile as he turned to her that I think if she had seen it she must have followed him wherever he went.

But she did not raise her eyes. 'I go to Berlin this evening,' she said. 'I have important engagements, and must leave at once.'

'My dear Frau Nieberlein,' exclaimed the bishop's wife, 'is not this very sudden?'

Brosy, who had been looking uncomfortable for some minutes quite apart from not having got his mouse, pulled out his watch and stood up. 'If we are to catch that steamer, mother, I think it would be wise to start,' he said.

'Nonsense, Brosy, it doesn't go for an hour,' said Mrs. Harvey-Browne, revolted at the notion of being torn from her celebrity in the very moment of finding him.

'I am afraid we must,' insisted Brosy. 'It takes much longer to get down the cliff than one would suppose. And it is slippery — I want to take you down an easier and rather longer way.'

And he carried her off, ruthlessly cutting short her parting entreaties that the Professor would come too, come to-morrow, then, come without fail the next day, then, to Binz; and he took her, as I observed, straight in the direction of the Hertha See as a beginning of the easy descent,

and the Hertha See, as everybody knows, is in the exactly contrary direction to the one he ought to have gone; but no doubt he filled up the hour instructively with stories of the ancient heathen rites performed on those mystic shores, and so left Charlotte free to behave to her husband as she chose.

How she did behave I can easily guess, for hurrying off into the pavilion, desirous of nothing except to get out of the way, I had hardly had time to marvel that she should be able to dislike such an old dear, when she burst in. 'Quick, quick — help me to get my things!' she cried, flying up and down the slit of a room and pouncing on the bags stowed away by Gertrud in corners. 'I can just catch the night train at Sassnitz — I'm off to Berlin — I'll write to you from there. Why, if that fool Gertrud hasn't emptied everything out! What a terrible fate yours is, always at the mercy of an overfed underling — a person who empties bags without being asked. Give me those brushes — and the papers. Well, you've seen me dragged down into the depths to-day, haven't you?' And she straightened herself from bending over the bag, a brush in each hand, and looking at me with a most bitter and defiant smile incontinently began to cry.

'Don't cry, Charlotte,' I said, who had been dumbly staring, 'don't cry, my dear. I didn't see any depths. I only saw nice things. Don't go to Berlin — stay here and let us be happy together.'



'Stay here? Never!' And she feverishly crammed things into her bag, and the bag must have been at least as full of tears as of other things, for she cried bitterly the whole time.

Well, women have always been a source of wonderment to me, myself included, who am for ever hurled in the direction of foolishness, for ever unable to stop; and never are they so mysterious, so wholly unaccountable, as in their relations to their husbands. But who shall judge them? The paths of fate are all so narrow that two people bound together, forced to walk abreast, cannot, except they keep perfect step, but push each other against the rocks on either side. So that it behoves the weaker and the lighter, if he would remain unbruised, to be very attentive, very adaptable, very deft.

I saw Charlotte off in one of the waiting waggons that was to take her to Sassnitz where the railway begins. 'I'll let you know where I am,' she called out as she was rattled away down the hill; and with a wave of the hand she turned the corner and vanished from my sight, gone once more into those frozen regions where noble and forlorn persons pursue ideals.

Walking back slowly through the trees towards the cliffs I met the Professor looking everywhere for his wife. 'What time does Lot leave?' he cried when he saw me. 'Must she really go?'

'She is gone.'

'No! How long since?'

'About ten minutes.'

'Then I too take that train.'

And he hurried off, clambering with the nimbleness that was all his own into a second waggonette, and disappeared in his turn down the hill. 'Dearest little cousin,' he shouted just before being whisked round the corner, 'permit me to bid thee farewell and wish thee good luck. I shall seriously endeavour to remember thee this time.'

'Do,' I called back, smiling; but he could not have heard.

Once again I slowly walked through the trees to the cliffs. The highest of these cliffs, the Königsstuhl, jutting out into the sea forms a plateau where a few trees that have weathered the winter storms of many years stand in little groups. For a long while I sat on the knotted roots of one of them, listening to the slow wash of the waves on the shingle far below. I saw the ribbon of smoke left by the Harvey-Browne's steamer get thinner and disappear. I watched the sunset-red fade out of the sky and sea, and all the world grow grey and full of secrets. Once, after I had sat there a very long time, I thought I heard the faint departing whistle of a far-distant train, and my heart leapt up with exultation. Oh the gloriousness of freedom and silence, of being alone with my own soul once more! I drew a long, long breath, and stood up and stretched myself in the supreme comfort of complete relaxation.



'You look very happy,' said a rather grudging voice close to me.

It belonged to a Fräulein of uncertain age, come up to the plateau in galoshes to commune in her turn with night and Nature; and I suppose I must have been smiling foolishly all over my face, after the manner of those whose thoughts are pleasant.

A Harvey-Browne impulse seized me to stare at her and turn my back, but I strangled it. 'Do you know why I look happy?' I inquired instead; and my voice was as the voice of turtle-doves.

'No — why?' was the eagerly inquisitive answer.

'Because I am.'

And nodding sweetly I walked away.

## THE EIGHTH DAY

FROM STUBBENKAMMER TO GLOWE

WHEN Reason lecturing us on certain actions explains that they are best avoided, and Experience with her sledge-hammers drives the lesson home, why do we, convinced and battered, repeat the actions every time we get the chance? I have known from my youth the opinion of Solomon that he that passeth by and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears; and I have a wise relative — not a blood-relation, but still very wise — who at suitable intervals addresses me in the following manner: — 'Don't meddle.' Yet now I have to relate how, on the eighth day of my journey round Rügen, in defiance of Reason, Experience, Solomon, and the wise relative, I began to meddle.

The first desire came upon me in the night, when I could not sleep because of the mosquitoes and the constant coming into the pavilion of late and jovial tourists. The tourists came in in jolly batches till well on towards morning, singing about things like the Rhine and the Fatherland's fron-