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THE BURNING ISLAND.

By CAMILLE DEBANS.

for him to hope to reach it, especially as his strength now evidently began to fail him.

He had just passed the mouth of a little river when a canoe, paddled by an Indian, entered the Amazon. At the bottom of the boat lay an apparently lifeless mass. This was poor Alfonso, who had also thrown himself into the first water he had come to, and who, by providential good fortune, had been saved by an Indian to whom he had formerly rendered some service at Salem.

But to return to the half caste. The current took him down, and he let himself swim with it. In the distance he perceived an island. All that he needed was to repose himself and wait for the morrow. Seeing himself saved, or nearly so, he began to turn over in his mind the events of the day, and this inhuman wretch indulged in a bitter sneer when he thought that Alfonso was probably stifled and burned in the forest.

About half past 6, a quarter of an hour before sunset, the Argentine reached the little island toward which he had been so long swimming. And it was time he did so. If he had had 500 yards more to go, his strength would have failed him. Scarcely had he put foot to the ground when he gently laid hold of the monkey and took him in his arms. The animal allowed him to do so. But either from ferocity or foresight the Argentine seized the charming little creature by one foot, whirled it four or five times around his head and savagely beat its brains out on the ground. The poor beast gave one struggle and then showed no further sign of life.

In spite of the heat of the climate, Gregorio felt his limbs stiff with cold. His long stay in the water had numbed them. So he rolled himself in the dust, with which all the surface of the island was covered, and which the rays of the sun had warmed all day. This restored him somewhat, but his longing for sleep became more imperious every moment. He was also frightfully tormented with hunger. He tore the skin off the monkey with his teeth and nails, and pulling off a thigh with the dexterity of a cannibal he got ready some branches of dead wood, to which he set fire, that he might cook his dinner.

The island on which Gregorio had taken refuge was absolutely desert and uncultivated. This was a very extraordinary thing for that part of the world. Only at the extreme western point a rock, on which a little vegetable earth had accumulated, was sheltered by three or four thorny and bushy little trees.

Over the whole surface of the island, with the exception of this rock, nothing could be seen but this dust, of the color of starch, in which Gregorio had, so to speak, bathed himself on his arrival. Here and there, however, a blade of grass, burned up by the sun, rose out of this dust. It seemed, moreover, as if nature had endeavored to assert its rights over this corner of the earth and had formerly caused something to grow in this place, for there might be seen some tallish branches, but without any foliage and absolutely dry. It was indeed by means of two of these sticks that Gregorio had lit his fire in the same way that savages do.

After having placed the leg of the monkey on the burning embers the half caste sat opposite his fire, with his knees drawn up, intending to wait till his supper was ready. Night had now fallen. Gregorio, worn out, felt his wearied eyelids close every now and then, and if it had not been for the pain of hunger he would have gone to sleep in this posture. One moment even, overcome by sleep, he dozed off.

But all of a sudden he leaped up as if a spring had been placed under his feet and uttered an indescribable shriek. It was made up of rage, anger, fear and despair. He looked round him, believing that he was the sport of some nightmare brought on by fatigue. With his aching knuckles he rubbed his eyes feverishly. No; he was not asleep. With an immense bound he rushed toward the river. To the first bound succeeded a second, then a third, till he ended by leaping like a terrified derrish, not knowing which way to run.

What had happened then? Something very natural and yet very terrible—the island was on fire. The whole of it was burning, and all along its length might be seen a lambent flame running here and there, just like what one sees on paper which the flame has left.

The explanation of this horrible fact is simple enough. The surface on which Gregorio landed was not really an island. It was a mass of dead wood—the trunks of oak, cedars, firs, palms, cocoanut trees, mahogany, which the Amazon had brought together there—who knows where from? The first trunks of the trees had been stopped by the rock where the four shrubs were growing; the others had accumulated, in time interlacing one another. Little by little the new arrivals had increased and lifted up the island above the water, and as this piling up of wood had gone on for some years the upper layers of the stack had been converted into dust, and a terribly inflammable dust too.

Gregorio understood it all, and how he had unconsciously applied the match to the timber. He wished to run toward the rock, but the soles of his scorched feet were being burned away, and no human being could endure such agony. What was he to do? To remain in his place was to be roasted. He could already perceive a smell of burned flesh, which mounted to his brain. He became mad. In the dusk of the twilight he could perfectly well distinguish all the soil of the island, which was growing red with frightful rapidity. One might have supposed that this furnace was being blown by some subterranean bellows.

Gregorio fell, but he regained his feet, and by an extraordinary effort of will he rushed toward the river. A fresh fall stopped him. At this moment the canoe bearing Alfonso in it passed before the island. The soldier, who by this time had regained consciousness, saw what seemed like an apparition

The soldier proposed that they should go nearer.

writhing in the fire and proposed to the Indian that they should go nearer, never dreaming that he was trying to save his would be executioner.

All this time Gregorio was howling with pain, for the whole of his body was surrounded by these redhot ashes. He raised himself indeed, but it was only to fall back on the other side, and presently Bacas saw the figure, which they vainly tried to reach, writhing in the midst of the furnace, the heat of which became more intense every moment. Burying his hands in the ashes, he dragged himself along toward the side of the river, wriggling like a serpent, his spine for an instant curved like a bow; then he fell back, made a convulsive movement, then one last struggle, and he remained motionless. Then the flame broke out.

The next day the island had disappeared. Some blackened trunks of trees, carried down by the current, floated out to the ocean.

On board a steamer putting out to sea a man with a worn and disfigured face watched these floating waifs with some interest. It was Alfonso Bacas, who, having safely reached Para, told his adventures to the captain of a vessel on the point of sailing and obtained a free passage to Europe.—Strand Magazine, by Courtesy of the International News Company.

Thirst.

There are certain stages of illness when water, no matter how sweet and pure it may be, tastes brackish and unpleasant, yet the patient will be devoured with thirst. Oftentimes a drink made of a teaspoonful of cranberry jelly dissolved in a glass of ice water will be quite refreshing. Other fruit jellies will answer, but they should have a tart flavor always.—New York News.

Glass blowing is represented on an Egyptian monument dating 2000 B. C.

ELSBETH'S HOLIDAY.

"No escape this time!" said old Baron Dornenburg, glaring somewhat savagely at an open letter in his hand. It was a letter from an old schoolfellow, now the representative of government in a distant province of Austria, and in it the baron was warmly appealed to on behalf of that schoolfellow's son.

At first sight there was nothing very appalling about this fact, and yet this was the moment which the widowed father of three daughters had been dreading for years.

The men who make successful chaperons are extremely few and far between. A male duenna is either overscrupulous or overlight in the fulfillment of his duties. The baron belonged to the former order to the extent of making life a burden to himself perpetually and not infrequently to others also. Young girls were treated by him as a dangerous explosive, within a mile of which no match should be struck for fear of a catastrophe, and so faithful was he to this theory that his friends frequently felt it their duty to reason with him.

"But, Dornenburg, how do you expect ever to get rid of your daughters if you keep them shut up behind gratings?" "Bless the man, he's surely not going to have three old maids help him into his grave?" Such and such like remarks flew past his ear, but left him unmoved. A male chaperon is so far easier to satisfy than a female one that the latter has no peace until her charge has made a brilliant marriage, whereas the former is content if she has not made a disgraceful one.

When on this September morning Baron Dornenburg had done glaring at his old comrade's letter, he reached the same conclusion he had begun with, "No escape this time!" After which he promptly sent for Miss Wilkins.

Miss Wilkins was his youngest daughter's governess, for the baron still had a daughter in the schoolroom, and she was likewise the English instructress of the elder baronesses. It had cost a hard fight before she had been secured, and peace with her. Being past 60 and bald and gouty, the baron had foolishly supposed that he would be unmolested by the fair sex. He very soon recognized his mistake. Various had been the frauleins and mademoiselles who had passed, in procession through the house of Dornenburg, each one of whom would have been ready to overlook both the bald head and the crippled joints for the sake of sharing with him the crown of seven points. Miss Wilkins was not only the oldest and plainest governess he had been able to unearth for love or money, but had something distinctly puritanical about her person, reassuring to any one with so shaky an opinion of female human nature as had this particular baron.

"Miss Wilkins," said Baron Dornenburg, addressing the gaunt, middle aged English woman as she entered, "I have had some very unpleasant news. My old friend, Count Kestler, writes to me here, saying that his son Conrad has just returned from his American tour and is very anxious for some shooting. His own deer forests have not yet recovered from the disease which infected them two years ago; consequently he appeals to me. I see no escape but to ask Conrad Kestler here for 10 days. It is to consult with you as to the precautions to be taken that I have requested your presence here. In the first place"——

"I presume the young man is unmarried?" asked Miss Wilkins abruptly, and a spark of some quite newly born interest seemed to illumine her usually chilly gray eyes.

"Of course Conrad is unmarried," confirmed the baron in some astonishment.

"And the Kestler's name has a good sound, and the fortune is considerable." Miss Wilkins was warming to her subject as she spoke. "Oh, Baron Dornenburg, I do believe that letter from your old friend is nothing but an interposition of Providence! Why, don't you see as clearly as possible that this means a husband for one of your daughters?"

"Hold, there," said the baron gruffly, flushing dark red from vexation. "If ever I believed that any woman could keep her fingers out of the matchmaking pie, I took you to be that woman, Miss Wilkins, but I do believe you're made of the same stuff as the others. Husband, indeed! Marriage! Count Kestler of Fohrenstein would long ago have fallen a prey to some enterprising Vienna mamma if matrimony had been in his line. I have not seen Conrad since he was a boy, but his fame as a manqueur de cœurs has long since penetrated even these woodland retreats. I understand him to rank as the most successful lady killer in Vienna society. In fact, his one vocation in life seems to be to go about turning heads and breaking hearts, and this is the man who for 10 days is to dwell under the same roof with my girls. Upon my word, it's letting the wolf into the sheepfold."

"Very possibly the wolf is not so black as he is painted," Miss Wilkins cautiously suggested.

"He is blacker, at any rate, far than he ought to be, and it will require both your vigilance and mine to checkmate the empty headed lovemaking with which he is sure to pass his time. I have been turning over the matter in my mind and have come to the conclusion that during these 10 critical days you must be the constant companion of my two elder girls. It is the only possibility of averting the danger that threatens."

"And Elsbeth?"

"Let the child have a holiday. It will do her no harm to shut up her books and run wild for 10 days."

Miss Wilkins shook her head, but so entirely were the baron's thoughts taken up with his elder girls that he never even noticed the disapproving gesture. Elsbeth was a child, still safe in the schoolroom. The day when she took to long skirts would be time enough to begin worrying about her.

When at the end of half an hour's private consultation the gaunt English woman left the baron's presence, she was primed with warnings, and yet, for all that—so obstinate are some fibers in human nature—the spark of matchmaking enthusiasm was not utterly quenched in her eye. Silently, but not the less irrevocably, was the middle aged English woman determined that this opportunity should not be lost. It was with an eye to the main object that she encouraged both Anna and Helene to pass their wardrobes in review and made various well meant but not overskillful attempts in the direction of freshening up tumbled flounces and procuring a new lease of life for hats which had borne the brunt of the summer. During this week of preparation such things as turned ribbons and half curled feathers belonged to the common features of the apartments, though the approach of the baron generally caused them to disappear. In their heart of hearts both girls had set upon those 10 prospective days hopes which as yet they had not acknowledged even to themselves. Even the domestic virtues, of which both possessed a fair share, could not blind them to the fact that it was rather hard to be aged, respectively, 20 and 22 without ever having seen the inside of a Vienna drawing room. Their own gentle resignation filled them with wonder, but nevertheless did not prevent occasional meditations being made on the possibility of a husband dropping from the skies. Count Conrad Kestler's proposed visit seemed exactly to answer to that description of event and was therefore duly prepared for.

"Will he be a big or a little man?" was the doubt which slunk in and out of the souls of both baronesses. The first sight of the stranger would help greatly to clear the situation, for the big Anna could place no hopes on a scrap of a man, while the miniature Helene would never have the courage to fall in love with a giant. And yet, when the day came and the moment, and when from behind the window curtains two pairs of blue eyes peeped at the new arrival, nothing like a definite conclusion was come to. Upon an identical impulse Anna and Helene looked at each other and laughed. Not a word was said, but they understood each other perfectly. The glance exchanged between the two sisters said as much as, "I must have another look at him before I make up my mind, but he is certain to do for one of us two."

This was the conclusion which Miss Wilkins likewise had reached, though she would have greatly preferred if Count Kestler had not been one of those men of indescribable height whom it would be incorrect to describe as tall, and who yet are unquestionably not short. So long as the prospective husband was not distinctly assigned to one of her charges she could not feel as though the campaign were opened.

But the first evening passed without betraying to Miss Wilkins anything beyond the fact of Count Kestler being a lady's man in the fullest sense of the word. When he was talking to Anna, the watchful English woman felt ready to stake her soul that he had succumbed to that young lady's massive charms, and yet the moment he approached Helene he appeared to have eyes for nothing but her fairylike grace. As for the poor overconscientious baron, he spent not only the evening, but most of the night, upon thorns, tossing about from side to side and passing in review before his mind's eye all the symptoms of lovesickness which he was convinced of having noted in both his daughters. Had not Anna forgotten to hand round the sugar, and Helene twice dropped her handkerchief in the course of the evening?

The author of all these cruel anxieties was meanwhile enjoying a perfectly unbroken night's rest. Owing to a belated butterfly which came sailing in by the open window, having slept through the proper butterfly season and being condemned to make the best of September weather, Count Kestler's morning slumbers came to a somewhat premature conclusion. Had it not been for this tardy butterfly much might have happened differently also. Whenever in future days his thoughts traveled back to the little yellow winged creature, Conrad Kestler saw in it a direct instrument of fate, or, at any rate, much more than an ordinary butterfly.

At the moment, however, it must be admitted that the instrument of fate was not greeted by him with all the delight that would have been becoming. Having opened his eyes to see what was tickling his nose, his lips first formed themselves to a mutter—about which perhaps the less said the better—and then to a yawn. In the very act of turning over for another snooze his eye was caught by the flash of light upon water, and he rose on his elbow to see the very first sunbeam sliding from between two pine clad mountain flanks and striking rose colored fire from the surface of a good sized lake.

Unquestionably it was a pretty prospect, and yet it was not so much the prospect itself as the meaning which it bore to him that caused Conrad Kestler to relinquish his idea of another snooze.

"I didn't know they had water here," shot through his mind. "That means wild ducks."

And half an hour later the newly arrived guest might have been observed sallying forth from the still sleeping house, with the intention of having a closer look at that sheet of water, which, seen from a distance, seemed to contain such delicious promises of sport.

This thought had been the motor of his action, but once having reached the open air he was in danger of forgetting his object, so surprised and pleased was he with what he saw on all sides, not that the trees at Dornenburg were older or finer than those of his own home, or the flower beds better kept, or the lawns better tended, but because for years past he had not seen any of those things with the first veil of morning still beautifying them, for which reason he appeared to be discovering them over again. There was something distinctly soothing about this consciousness of being the only member awake of a household. Why, the chances were that not even the kitchen fire was yet lit, nor was either rake or spade being plied anywhere within sight. No privacy could have been more perfect, no promenade more ideally planned for the purposes of a quiet meditation. So irresistible, in fact, were the accessories that Conrad had scarcely reached the middle of the lime tree avenue, which led from the door of the house, when he found himself drifting into a course of serious reflections.

"My father had an object in sending me here beyond that of shooting wild ducks." Thus ran the current of his thoughts. "I know he thinks it time for me to settle, and nothing would please him better than for me to marry one of the daughters of his old comrade. Dear old vater! I would please him if I could, but nothing would ever make me content with either a giantess or a pygmy. And it's a pity, too," he continued, "for I like golden hair, and both the big and the little face are very pleasantly pink and white, and I suppose it is about time for me to be getting settled."

When he had paced down another bit of the avenue, he seemed to remember that his father had spoken about three Dornenburg girls.

"And I have only seen two as yet," he reflected, "which means, I suppose, that the third is in the nursery."

So deep was he in his meditations that when at the end of the avenue he stepped out on the very shore of the lake he stood still in as much astonishment as though this had not been the

He stood still in astonishment.

object of his walk. At the same moment he became aware that he was, after all, not the only member of the household abroad. In a boat chained to a pole at the edge of the water there stood a girl with a straw hat shading her face and her back turned to him, while she busied herself with the fastening.

Conrad's first impression was one of annoyance at the interruption of his privacy. His second was the question, "Who can this be?" Both the hair and what he could see of the curve of the cheek seemed to be of the right color, and yet did not appear to him to be either quite the big or quite the little Dornenburg girl.

At this moment she straightened herself and turned round, evidently despairing of the chain. Perhaps it was owing to his thoughts having been occupied with the question of feminine stature that Conrad was now aware of a distinct feeling of satisfaction, for there could be no doubt about this apparition being of the "right height," just as there could be no doubt about its being the youngest Dornenburg girl.

"Let me help you with that chain," said Conrad, stepping forward, much relieved by the discovery that the young boatwoman's skirts were not quite regulation length, which was enough with one blow to banish etiquette from the scene. "I fancy I know that sort of fastening. But first let me introduce myself. I am"——

"I know who you are quite as well as you know yourself," she briskly interrupted him. "Why, the house has been positively alive with your name since this time last week. I never thought I could get so tired of any person before seeing him."

"You don't say so! I really was not prepared"—stammered Conrad, whose habit it was not to be easily taken aback, but who nevertheless felt rather at a loss for words wherewith to answer this unexpected address. "I was not aware of having cast so huge a shadow before me. There, the chain is undone, and now, unless you have irrevocably made up your mind to solitude, perhaps you will allow me to row you out on the lake?"

She looked at him critically, as though turning over the proposition in her mind, but ended by acquiescing.

"I want some of those bulrushes over there," she remarked when they had pushed off from the shore. "And you can help me to gather them if you like. So perhaps, after all, it was a piece of good luck that brought you out walking so early, though I didn't think so at first sight. I had been looking forward to having the whole lake to myself and was greatly bothered by seeing you."

"If I am to be quite honest," said Conrad, showing his even, white teeth, "I must confess to having likewise felt far from delighted at the first moment of our meeting. After all, it is only human nature to bear a grudge against the person whose appearance on the scene brings us down a peg in our own estimation by proving to us that we are not the only individuals about."

"You are describing exactly what I felt," remarked the girl, with grave approval. "I do believe I hated you at first sight."

"That sounds as though your virtue were as spasmodic as mine and I were mistaken in counting you among that chosen tribe known as early risers."

"That depends upon what I have got to get up for. Surely nobody in their senses would hurry out of bed on account of lessons, while, again, it's a pity to waste a bit of a holiday asleep. By the bye, how many days are you going to stay here?"

"I believe the baron is going to let me stay till the 16th."

"Couldn't you make it a little longer? I am sure you could manage to trail out your visit to the 20th at least, if you tried."

"I really don't exactly know," said Conrad in renewed astonishment.

"You are surprised at my asking you to stay after having told you that I hated you at first sight. The explanation is really very simple. You see," and here the childish face settled into an expression of preternatural seriousness, "as long as you are here I am sure of my holidays. Therefore it stands to reason that I want you to stay as long as you possibly can."

"As long as I am here!" Conrad smiled a smile of puzzled amusement. "This is really very interesting. I was not aware I had reached the stage of holidays being given in my honor."

"As far as I can make out, it's not in your honor exactly, but as a sort of defense against you. By the bye, you are sure to be able to tell me what a lady killer is. I want very much to know."

"Why am I so sure to be able to tell you?"

"Because I heard papa saying to Miss Wilkins—he has been having long talks with her almost every day for the last week—that she must keep her eyes well open because the visitor he expected was a dangerous lady killer. And it is in order to leave her plenty of liberty for opening her eyes that my lessons have been stopped, and that for the time of your stay she has transformed herself from a governess into a kind of"——

"Gooseberry," completed Conrad, with an amused chuckle. "Come; this raises me enormously in my own estimation. I had no idea I was so irresistible as all this."

"Then being a lady killer means being irresistible, does it? It is one of those things, I suppose, I ought to know by this time, considering that I was 17 last month."

"Were you really?" asked Conrad in genuine astonishment. "I would never have guessed more than 15."

"That's all thanks to these ridiculous short skirts," she retorted, flushing scarlet from vexation. "It always costs papa a tremendous pang to acknowledge any of us grown up. That's one of the reasons why I've always got to take my meals in the schoolroom when there's a guest in the house. Oh, not so quick! Here we are at the bulrushes!"

"Do you think it would make the boat sink if I took them all?" she asked at the end of 10 minutes, during which both she and Conrad had been hard at work, and in the course of which she had gradually rid herself of hat, gloves and jacket. Her light golden hair was powdered with feathery morsels of reeds, and her blue eyes were shining with intense enjoyment.

"It looks rather like it, but must we have them all at once? Is there any reason why we should not return for a second or a third helping?"

"No, only that you will be going out shooting after breakfast."

"But there are other days before the 16th."

"So there are. And if papa should ask you to stay beyond the 16th, please remember what I told you about my lessons. Let me see. How could you manage to convey to me that the matter is settled? It will be best, I think, if we invent some sort of sign."

"This is ripening into a conspiracy," said Conard in increasing amusement. "I had no idea what I was letting myself in for when I turned out of bed this morning. But for fear you should indulge in empty dreams of holidays to come, perhaps I had better tell you at once that my father expects me home on the 16th."

She heaved a sigh of disappointment, but added at once philosophically:

"Well, all I can do is to make the most of the 10 days I have got before me, though I know quite well that I shall never be able to get through all the bramble and bilberry hunts I have planned, nor to collect half the mushrooms I have got my eye upon. This is the very best season for holidays, you see."

"If you consider me worthy of the post," said Conrad, slipping as he spoke almost unconsciously into the tone of gallantry he generally adopted toward women, "I should be most happy to act as adjutant. Of course only under the supposition," and here his eyes twinkled mischievously, "that you have no objections to the company of a lady killer."

"Why should I have any objection? I suppose a lady killer can only become dangerous for a full grown lady, and I am not that yet, as papa is never tired of telling me."

Once more Conrad felt almost foolish. The straight gaze of these cloudless blue eyes was enough to make the practiced man of the world feel as though he had been attempting a sacrilege.

It was just after they had parted on the shore of the lake that Count Kestler heard his name very earnestly pronounced and became aware that the young boatwoman was hurrying after him.

"Do think of it again," she said rather breathlessly. "I mean about the 16th, and if it is possible, please, please stay a little longer."

With the last words she had turned again and in the same moment disappeared among the bushes. Conrad could hear the twigs snapping to the right and to the left after he had lost sight of her.

It was not until he had got back to the house that he suddenly remembered the wild ducks, and, very much to his astonishment, realized that, as far as knowing whether there were any to be hoped for on the lake, he had come back exactly as wise as he had started.

Breakfast was scarcely over when the battered green hat of the old gamekeeper was seen to pass the window, whereupon Conrad became a sportsman again, and leaving his second cup of coffee untouched hurried away for his gun.

As for the second time that day he made his way down the lime avenue he could not help wondering why he had not mentioned his matutinal excursion in the boat, and the only conclusion he could come to was that a touch of mystery never fails to give a charm to the most commonplace adventure, and that the idea of a plot between himself and the youngest baroness, whom he understood to be called Elsbeth, had tickled his fancy.

Meanwhile the old baron had established himself in his armchair with a heartfelt sigh of relief. For the next few hours at least he might relax his vigilance, seeing that the dreaded individual was safely disposed of.

But a rude shock awaited the baron's peace of mind that evening when the conversation at the supper table acquainted him with the fact that Anna and Helene's afternoon walk had, strangely enough, taken the same direction as Conrad Kestler's shooting excursion, whether through a provoking coincidence or owing to some culpable negligence of Miss Wilkins, who had been of the party, it was difficult to ascertain. Never before had the baron so acutely felt the inconvenience of being gouty. With the free use of his joints half his anxieties would have been relieved, for as long as he could be the constant companion of his dangerous guest it was pretty certain that all serious peril could be averted.

To add to his anxieties, the cloudless September weather seemed bent upon tempting the girls to extend their daily promenades far beyond their normal length. From breakfast to dinner and from dinner to supper the baron was generally alone at home—for Elsbeth made the most of her holidays by running wild in her own company—and passed his time in fuming at his enforced inactivity and counting the days till Count Kestler's departure.

Gradually, however, he became aware, somewhat to his own annoyance, that the feelings with which he was looking forward to the 16th were not feelings of unmixed pleasure. Conrad might be a lady killer of the first water, whose path was strewn with broken hearts much as the seashore is strewn with broken shells, but that did not prevent his voice and his laugh and something in the irresistible sparkle of his eye carrying back the baron very vividly in memory to the days when his old comrade had been young. It was with a pleasant feeling of surprise, too, that he noted another circumstance in connection with his guest. Conrad evidently was no lie abed. On two different occasions the old gentleman had caught sight of Count Kestler sallying forth from the house at an hour when the housemaids should indeed have been astir, but were not, and he regularly appeared late for breakfast with hair wet by dew and not infrequently with fragments of grass or a red or yellow leaf clinging to his coat. The baron began to admit that there must, after all, be some good in the man. An individual who found pleasure in such simple country enjoyments as a walk before breakfast could not be entirely corrupted by the wickedness of town life.

Miss Wilkins, on her side, was much pleased by the discovery that a point which for long had been a rather sore one between herself and her pupil had shaped itself according to her wishes.

"Your cheeks are twice as pink as usual and your eyes twice as blue," she said approvingly on meeting Elsbeth in the passage one morning, laden with autumn crocuses. "That is the result of early hours."

"Or of holidays," said Elsbeth promptly.

"Can you explain to me how it comes about that you require so much less sleep during the holidays than on lesson days? I don't know of any bribe by which I could have got you out of bed before 7 o'clock, so long as books and atlases were in sight."

Elsbeth smiled happily and almost a little guiltily, but attempted no explanation and listened with a quite unusual patience to the wholesome remarks on the subject of early rising with which Miss Wilkins considered it her duty to improve the occasion.

Neither did Anna and Helene entirely escape, but these two young ladies submitted quite passively to having their younger sister held up to them as an example of good conduct and got out of bed no earlier next day. As long as there was a guest in the house it was obviously expedient to keep one's self fresh for the evening hours by lying late in the morning.

It was on the fifth day of Conrad's stay that the baron, when parting with him for the night, remarked approvingly:

"I see you are as faithful a cultivator of morning hours as your father used to be, but I fear your walk tomorrow is likely to turn into a shower bath."

Conrad looked somewhat taken aback, and having reached the privacy of his room he flung himself into a chair and began to review the situation.

"That looks like being watched." Thus ran the course of his reflections.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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