Prince Otto,

By

Robert Louis Stevenson

PRINCE OTTO—A ROMANCE

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ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

TO NELLY VAN DE GRIFT
(MRS. ADULFO SANCHEZ, OF MONTEREY)

At last, after so many years, I have the pleasure of re-introducing you to 'Prince Otto,' whom you will remember a very little fellow, no bigger in fact than a few sheets of memoranda written for me by your kind hand. The sight of his name will carry you back to an old wooden house embowered in creepers; a house that was far gone in the respectable stages of antiquity and seemed indissoluble from the green garden in which it stood, and that yet was a sea-traveller in its younger days, and had come round the Horn piecemeal in the belly of a ship, and might have heard the seamen stamping and shouting and the note of the boatswain's whistle. It will recall to you the nondescript inhabitants now so widely

scattered:—the two horses, the dog, and the four cats, some of them still looking in your face as you read these lines;—the poor lady, so unfortunately married to an author;—the China boy, by this time, perhaps, baiting his line by the banks of a river in the Flowery Land;—and in particular the Scot who was then sick apparently unto death, and whom you did so much to cheer and keep in good behaviour.

You may remember that he was full of ambitions and designs: so soon as he had his health again completely, you may remember the fortune he was to earn, the journeys he was to go upon, the delights he was to enjoy and confer, and (among other matters) the masterpiece he was to make of 'Prince Otto'!

Well, we will not give in that we are finally beaten. We read together in those days the story of Braddock, and how, as he was carried dying from the scene of his defeat, he promised himself to do better another time: a story that will always touch a brave heart, and a dying speech worthy of a more fortunate commander. I try to be of Braddock's mind. I still mean to get my health again; I still purpose, by hook or crook, this book or the next, to launch a masterpiece; and I still intend—somehow, some time or other—to see your face and to hold your hand.

Meanwhile, this little paper traveller goes forth instead, crosses the great seas and the long plains and the dark mountains, and comes at last to your door in Monterey, charged with tender greetings. Pray you, take him in. He comes from a house where (even as in your own) there are

gathered together some of the waifs of our company at Oakland: a house—for all its outlandish Gaelic name and distant station—where you are well-beloved.

R. L. S.

Skerryvore,

Bournemouth.

BOOK I—PRINCE ERRANT

CHAPTER I—IN WHICH THE PRINCE DEPARTS ON AN ADVENTURE

You shall seek in vain upon the map of Europe for the bygone state of Grünewald. An independent principality, an infinitesimal member of the German Empire, she played, for several centuries, her part in the discord of Europe; and, at last, in the ripeness of time and at the spiriting of several bald diplomatists, vanished like a morning ghost. Less fortunate than Poland, she left not a regret behind her; and the very memory of her boundaries has faded.

It was a patch of hilly country covered with thick wood. Many streams took their beginning in the glens of Grünewald, turning mills for the inhabitants. There was one town, Mittwalden, and many brown, wooden hamlets, climbing roof above roof, along the steep bottom of dells, and communicating by covered bridges over the larger of the torrents. The hum of watermills, the splash of running water, the clean odour of pine sawdust, the sound and smell of the pleasant wind among the innumerable army of the mountain pines, the dropping fire of huntsmen, the dull stroke of the wood-axe, intolerable roads, fresh trout for supper in the clean bare chamber of an inn, and the song of birds and the music of the village-bells—these were the recollections of the Grünewald tourist.

North and east the foothills of Grünewald sank with varying profile into a vast plain. On these sides many small states bordered with the principality, Gerolstein, an extinct grand duchy, among the number. On the south it marched with the comparatively powerful kingdom of Seaboard Bohemia, celebrated for its flowers and mountain bears, and inhabited by a people of singular simplicity and tenderness of heart. Several intermarriages had, in the course of centuries, united the crowned families of Grünewald and Maritime Bohemia; and the last Prince of Grünewald, whose history I purpose to relate, drew his descent through Perdita, the only daughter of King Florizel the First of Bohemia. That these intermarriages had in some degree mitigated the rough, manly stock of the first Grünewalds, was an opinion widely held within the borders of the principality. The charcoal burner, the mountain sawyer, the wielder of the broad axe among the congregated pines of Grünewald, proud of their hard hands, proud of their shrewd ignorance and almost savage lore, looked with an unfeigned contempt on the soft character and manners of the sovereign race.

The precise year of grace in which this tale begins shall be left to the conjecture of the reader. But for the season of the year (which, in such a story, is the more important of the two) it was already so far forward in the spring, that when mountain people heard horns echoing all day about the north-west corner of the principality, they told themselves that Prince Otto and his hunt were up and out for the last time till the return of autumn.

At this point the borders of Grünewald descend somewhat steeply, here and

there breaking into crags; and this shaggy and trackless country stands in a bold contrast to the cultivated plain below. It was traversed at that period by two roads alone; one, the imperial highway, bound to Brandenau in Gerolstein, descended the slope obliquely and by the easiest gradients. The other ran like a fillet across the very forehead of the hills, dipping into savage gorges, and wetted by the spray of tiny waterfalls. Once it passed beside a certain tower or castle, built sheer upon the margin of a formidable cliff, and commanding a vast prospect of the skirts of Grünewald and the busy plains of Gerolstein. The Felsenburg (so this tower was called) served now as a prison, now as a hunting-seat; and for all it stood so lonesome to the naked eye, with the aid of a good glass the burghers of Brandenau could count its windows from the lime-tree terrace where they walked at night.

In the wedge of forest hillside enclosed between the roads, the horns continued all day long to scatter tumult; and at length, as the sun began to draw near to the horizon of the plain, a rousing triumph announced the slaughter of the quarry. The first and second huntsman had drawn somewhat aside, and from the summit of a knoll gazed down before them on the drooping shoulders of the hill and across the expanse of plain. They covered their eyes, for the sun was in their faces. The glory of its going down was somewhat pale. Through the confused tracery of many thousands of naked poplars, the smoke of so many houses, and the evening steam ascending from the fields, the sails of a windmill on a gentle eminence moved very conspicuously, like a donkey's ears. And hard by, like an open gash, the imperial high-road ran straight sun-ward, an artery of travel.

There is one of nature's spiritual ditties, that has not yet been set to words or human music: 'The Invitation to the Road'; an air continually sounding in the ears of gipsies, and to whose inspiration our nomadic fathers journeyed all their days. The hour, the season, and the scene, all were in delicate accordance. The air was full of birds of passage, steering westward and northward over Grünewald, an army of specks to the up-looking eye. And below, the great practicable road was bound for the same quarter.

But to the two horsemen on the knoll this spiritual ditty was unheard. They were, indeed, in some concern of mind, scanning every fold of the subjacent forest, and betraying both anger and dismay in their impatient gestures.

'I do not see him, Kuno,' said the first huntsman, 'nowhere—not a trace, not a hair of the mare's tail! No, sir, he's off; broke cover and got away. Why, for twopence I would hunt him with the dogs!'

'Mayhap, he's gone home,' said Kuno, but without conviction.

'Home!' sneered the other. 'I give him twelve days to get home. No, it's begun again; it's as it was three years ago, before he married; a disgrace! Hereditary prince, hereditary fool! There goes the government over the borders on a grey mare. What's that? No, nothing—no, I tell you, on my word, I set more store by a good gelding or an English dog. That for your Otto!'

'He's not my Otto,' growled Kuno.

'Then I don't know whose he is,' was the retort.

'You would put your hand in the fire for him to-morrow,' said Kuno, facing round.

'Me!' cried the huntsman. 'I would see him hanged! I'm a Grünewald patriot—enrolled, and have my medal, too; and I would help a prince! I'm for liberty and Gondremark.'

'Well, it's all one,' said Kuno. 'If anybody said what you said, you would have his blood, and you know it.'

'You have him on the brain,' retorted his companion. 'There he goes!' he cried, the next moment.

And sure enough, about a mile down the mountain, a rider on a white horse was seen to flit rapidly across a heathy open and vanish among the trees on the farther side.

'In ten minutes he'll be over the border into Gerolstein,' said Kuno. 'It's past cure.'

'Well, if he founders that mare, I'll never forgive him,' added the other, gathering his reins.

And as they turned down from the knoll to rejoin their comrades, the sun dipped and disappeared, and the woods fell instantly into the gravity and greyness of the early night.

CHAPTER II—IN WHICH THE PRINCE PLAYS HAROUN-AL-RASCHID

The night fell upon the Prince while he was threading green tracks in the lower valleys of the wood; and though the stars came out overhead and displayed the interminable order of the pine-tree pyramids, regular and dark like cypresses, their light was of small service to a traveller in such lonely paths, and from thenceforth he rode at random. The austere face of nature, the uncertain issue of his course, the open sky and the free air, delighted him like wine; and the hoarse chafing of a river on his left sounded in his ears agreeably.

It was past eight at night before his toil was rewarded and he issued at last out of the forest on the firm white high-road. It lay downhill before him, with a sweeping eastward trend, faintly bright between the thickets; and Otto paused and gazed upon it. So it ran, league after league, still joining others, to the farthest ends of Europe, there skirting the sea-surge, here gleaming in the lights of cities; and the innumerable army of tramps and travellers moved upon it in all lands as by a common impulse, and were now in all places drawing near to the inn door and the night's rest. The pictures swarmed and vanished in his brain; a surge of temptation, a beat of all his blood, went over him, to set spur to the mare and to go on into the unknown for ever. And then it passed away; hunger and fatigue, and that habit of middling actions which we call common sense, resumed their empire; and in that changed mood his eye lighted upon two bright windows on his left hand, between the road

and river.

He turned off by a by-road, and in a few minutes he was knocking with his whip on the door of a large farmhouse, and a chorus of dogs from the farmyard were making angry answer. A very tall, old, white-headed man came, shading a candle, at the summons. He had been of great strength in his time, and of a handsome countenance; but now he was fallen away, his teeth were quite gone, and his voice when he spoke was broken and falsetto.

'You will pardon me,' said Otto. 'I am a traveller and have entirely lost my way.'

'Sir,' said the old man, in a very stately, shaky manner, 'you are at the River Farm, and I am Killian Gottesheim, at your disposal. We are here, sir, at about an equal distance from Mittwalden in Grünewald and Brandenau in Gerolstein: six leagues to either, and the road excellent; but there is not a wine bush, not a carter's alehouse, anywhere between. You will have to accept my hospitality for the night; rough hospitality, to which I make you freely welcome; for, sir,' he added with a bow, 'it is God who sends the guest.'

'Amen. And I most heartily thank you,' replied Otto, bowing in his turn.

'Fritz,' said the old man, turning towards the interior, 'lead round this gentleman's horse; and you, sir, condescend to enter.'

Otto entered a chamber occupying the greater part of the ground-floor of the building. It had probably once been divided; for the farther end was raised by a long step above the nearer, and the blazing fire and the white supper-table seemed to stand upon a daïs. All around were dark, brass-mounted cabinets and cupboards; dark shelves carrying ancient country crockery; guns and antlers and broadside ballads on the wall; a tall old clock with roses on the dial; and down in one corner the comfortable promise of a wine barrel. It was homely, elegant, and quaint.

A powerful youth hurried out to attend on the grey mare; and when Mr. Killian Gottesheim had presented him to his daughter Ottilia, Otto followed to the stable as became, not perhaps the Prince, but the good horseman. When he returned, a smoking omelette and some slices of home-cured ham were waiting him; these were followed by a ragout and a cheese; and it was not until his guest had entirely satisfied his hunger, and the whole party drew about the fire over the wine jug, that Killian Gottesheim's elaborate courtesy permitted him to address a question to the Prince.

'You have perhaps ridden far, sir?' he inquired.

'I have, as you say, ridden far,' replied Otto; 'and, as you have seen, I was prepared to do justice to your daughters cookery.'

'Possibly, sir, from the direction of Brandenau?' continued Killian.

'Precisely: and I should have slept to-night, had I not wandered, in Mittwalden,' answered the Prince, weaving in a patch of truth, according to the habit of all liars.

'Business leads you to Mittwalden?' was the next question.

'Mere curiosity,' said Otto. 'I have never yet visited the principality of Grünewald.'

'A pleasant state, sir,' piped the old man, nodding, 'a very pleasant state, and a fine race, both pines and people. We reckon ourselves part Grünewalders here, lying so near the borders; and the river there is all good Grünewald water, every drop of it. Yes, sir, a fine state. A man of Grünewald now will swing me an axe over his head that many a man of Gerolstein could hardly lift; and the pines, why, deary me, there must be more pines in that little state, sir, than people in this whole big world. 'Tis twenty years now since I crossed the marshes, for we grow home-keepers in old age; but I mind it as if it was yesterday. Up and down, the road keeps right on from here to Mittwalden; and nothing all the way but the good green pine-trees, big and little, and water-power! water-power at every step, sir. We once sold a bit of forest, up there beside the high-road; and the sight of minted money that we got for it has set me ciphering ever since what all the pines in Grünewald would amount to.'

'I suppose you see nothing of the Prince?' inquired Otto.

'No,' said the young man, speaking for the first time, 'nor want to.'

'Why so? is he so much disliked?' asked Otto.

'Not what you might call disliked,' replied the old gentleman, 'but despised, sir.'

'Indeed,' said the Prince, somewhat faintly.

'Yes, sir, despised,' nodded Killian, filling a long pipe, 'and, to my way of thinking, justly despised. Here is a man with great opportunities, and what does he do with them? He hunts, and he dresses very prettily—which is a thing to be ashamed of in a man—and he acts plays; and if he does aught else, the news of it has not come here.'

'Yet these are all innocent,' said Otto. 'What would you have him do—make war?'

'No, sir,' replied the old man. 'But here it is; I have been fifty years upon this River Farm, and wrought in it, day in, day out; I have ploughed and sowed and reaped, and risen early, and waked late; and this is the upshot: that all these years it has supported me and my family; and been the best friend that ever I had, set aside my wife; and now, when my time comes, I leave it a better farm than when I found it. So it is, if a man works hearty in the order of nature, he gets bread and he receives comfort, and whatever he touches breeds. And it humbly appears to me, if that Prince was to labour on his throne, as I have laboured and wrought

in my farm, he would find both an increase and a blessing.'

'I believe with you, sir,' Otto said; 'and yet the parallel is inexact. For the farmer's life is natural and simple; but the prince's is both artificial and complicated. It is easy to do right in the one, and exceedingly difficult not to do wrong in the other. If your crop is blighted, you can take off your bonnet and say, "God's will be done"; but if the prince meets with a reverse, he may have to blame himself for the attempt. And perhaps, if all the kings in Europe were to confine themselves to innocent amusement, the subjects would be the better off.'

'Ay,' said the young man Fritz, 'you are in the right of it there. That was a true word spoken. And I see you are like me, a good patriot and an enemy to princes.'

Otto was somewhat abashed at this deduction, and he made haste to change
his ground. 'But,' said he, 'you surprise me by what you say of this Prince Otto. I have heard him, I must own, more favourably painted. I was told he was, in his heart, a good fellow, and the enemy of no one but himself.'

'And so he is, sir,' said the girl, 'a very handsome, pleasant prince; and we know some who would shed their blood for him.'

'O! Kuno!' said Fritz. 'An ignoramus!'

'Ay, Kuno, to be sure,' quavered the old farmer. 'Well, since this gentleman is a stranger to these parts, and curious about the Prince, I do believe that story might divert him. This Kuno, you must know, sir, is one of the hunt servants, and a most ignorant, intemperate man: a right Grünewalder, as we say in Gerolstein. We know him well, in this house; for he has come as far as here after his stray dogs; and I make all welcome, sir, without account of state or nation. And, indeed, between Gerolstein and Grünewald the peace has held so long that the roads stand open like my door; and a man will make no more of the frontier than the very birds themselves.'

'Ay,' said Otto, 'it has been a long peace—a peace of centuries.'

'Centuries, as you say,' returned Killian; 'the more the pity that it should not be for ever. Well, sir, this Kuno was one day in fault, and Otto, who has a quick temper, up with his whip and thrashed him, they do say, soundly. Kuno took it as best he could, but at last he broke out, and dared the Prince to throw his whip away and wrestle like a man; for we are all great at wrestling in these parts, and it's so that we generally settle our disputes. Well, sir, the Prince did so; and, being a weakly creature, found the tables turned; for the man whom he had just been thrashing like a negro slave, lifted him with a back grip and threw him heels overhead.'

'He broke his bridle-arm,' cried Fritz—'and some say his nose. Serve him right, say I! Man to man, which is the better at that?'

'And then?' asked Otto.

'O, then Kuno carried him home; and they were the best of friends from that day forth. I don't say it's a discreditable story, you observe,' continued Mr. Gottesheim; 'but it's droll, and that's the fact. A man should think before he strikes; for, as my nephew says, man to man was the old valuation.'

'Now, if you were to ask me,' said Otto, 'I should perhaps surprise you. I think it was the Prince that conquered.'

'And, sir, you would be right,' replied Killian seriously. 'In the eyes of God, I do not question but you would be right; but men, sir, look at these things differently, and they laugh.'

'They made a song of it,' observed Fritz. 'How does it go? Ta-tum-ta-ra . . .'

'Well,' interrupted Otto, who had no great anxiety to hear the song, 'the Prince is young; he may yet mend.'

'Not so young, by your leave,' cried Fritz. 'A man of forty.'

'Thirty-six,' corrected Mr. Gottesheim.

'O,' cried Ottilia, in obvious disillusion, 'a man of middle age! And they said he was so handsome when he was young!'

'And bald, too,' added Fritz.

Otto passed his hand among his locks. At that moment he was far from happy, and even the tedious evenings at Mittwalden Palace began to smile upon him by comparison.

'O, six-and-thirty!' he protested. 'A man is not yet old at six-and-thirty. I am that age myself.'

'I should have taken you for more, sir,' piped the old farmer. 'But if that be so, you are of an age with Master Ottekin, as people call him; and, I would wager a crown, have done more service in your time. Though it seems young by comparison with men of a great age like me, yet it's some way through life for all that; and the mere fools and fiddlers are beginning to grow weary and to look old. Yes, sir, by six-and-thirty, if a man be a follower of God's laws, he should have made himself a home and a good name to live by; he should have got a wife and a blessing on his marriage; and his works, as the Word says, should begin to follow him.'

'Ah, well, the Prince is married,' cried Fritz, with a coarse burst of laughter.

'That seems to entertain you, sir,' said Otto.

'Ay,' said the young boor. 'Did you not know that? I thought all Europe knew it!' And he added a pantomime of a nature to explain his accusation

to the dullest.

'Ah, sir,' said Mr. Gottesheim, 'it is very plain that you are not from hereabouts! But the truth is, that the whole princely family and Court are rips and rascals, not one to mend another. They live, sir, in idleness and—what most commonly follows it—corruption. The Princess has a lover—a Baron, as he calls himself, from East Prussia; and the Prince is so little of a man, sir, that he holds the candle. Nor is that the worst of it, for this foreigner and his paramour are suffered to transact the State affairs, while the Prince takes the salary and leaves all things to go to wrack. There will follow upon this some manifest judgment which, though I am old, I may survive to see.'

'Good man, you are in the wrong about Gondremark,' said Fritz, showing a greatly increased animation; 'but for all the rest, you speak the God's truth like a good patriot. As for the Prince, if he would take and strangle his wife, I would forgive him yet.'

'Nay, Fritz,' said the old man, 'that would be to add iniquity to evil. For you perceive, sir,' he continued, once more addressing himself to the unfortunate Prince, 'this Otto has himself to thank for these disorders. He has his young wife and his principality, and he has sworn to cherish both.'

'Sworn at the altar!' echoed Fritz. 'But put your faith in princes!'

'Well, sir, he leaves them both to an adventurer from East Prussia,' pursued the farmer: 'leaves the girl to be seduced and to go on from bad to worse, till her name's become a tap-room by-word, and she not yet twenty; leaves the country to be overtaxed, and bullied with armaments, and jockied into war—'

'War!' cried Otto.

'So they say, sir; those that watch their ongoings, say to war,' asseverated Killian. 'Well, sir, that is very sad; it is a sad thing for this poor, wicked girl to go down to hell with people's curses; it's a sad thing for a tight little happy country to be misconducted; but whoever may complain, I humbly conceive, sir, that this Otto cannot. What he has worked for, that he has got; and may God have pity on his soul, for a great and a silly sinner's!'

'He has broke his oath; then he is a perjurer. He takes the money and leaves the work; why, then plainly he's a thief. A cuckold he was before, and a fool by birth. Better me that!' cried Fritz, and snapped his fingers.

'And now, sir, you will see a little,' continued the farmer, 'why we think so poorly of this Prince Otto. There's such a thing as a man being pious and honest in the private way; and there is such a thing, sir, as a public virtue; but when a man has neither, the Lord lighten him! Even this Gondremark, that Fritz here thinks so much of—'

'Ay,' interrupted Fritz, 'Gondremark's the man for me. I would we had his like in Gerolstein.'

'He is a bad man,' said the old farmer, shaking his head; 'and there was never good begun by the breach of God's commandments. But so far I will go with you; he is a man that works for what he has.'

'I tell you he's the hope of Grünewald,' cried Fritz. 'He doesn't suit some of your high-and-dry, old, ancient ideas; but he's a downright modern man—a man of the new lights and the progress of the age. He does some things wrong; so they all do; but he has the people's interests next his heart; and you mark me—you, sir, who are a Liberal, and the enemy of all their governments, you please to mark my words—the day will come in Grünewald, when they take out that yellow-headed skulk of a Prince and that dough-faced Messalina of a Princess, march 'em back foremost over the borders, and proclaim the Baron Gondremark first President. I've heard them say it in a speech. I was at a meeting once at Brandenau, and the Mittwalden delegates spoke up for fifteen thousand. Fifteen thousand, all brigaded, and each man with a medal round his neck to rally by. That's all Gondremark.'

'Ay, sir, you see what it leads to; wild talk to-day, and wilder doings to-morrow,' said the old man. 'For there is one thing certain: that this Gondremark has one foot in the Court backstairs, and the other in the Masons' lodges. He gives himself out, sir, for what nowadays they call a patriot: a man from East Prussia!'

'Give himself out!' cried Fritz. 'He is! He is to lay by his title as soon as the Republic is declared; I heard it in a speech.'

'Lay by Baron to take up President?' returned Killian. 'King Log, King Stork. But you'll live longer than I, and you will see the fruits of it.'

'Father,' whispered Ottilia, pulling at the speaker's coat, 'surely the gentleman is ill.'

'I beg your pardon,' cried the farmer, rewaking to hospitable thoughts; 'can I offer you anything?'

'I thank you. I am very weary,' answered Otto. 'I have presumed upon my strength. If you would show me to a bed, I should be grateful.'

'Ottilia, a candle!' said the old man. 'Indeed, sir, you look paley. A little cordial water? No? Then follow me, I beseech you, and I will bring you to the stranger's bed. You are not the first by many who has slept well below my roof,' continued the old gentleman, mounting the stairs before his guest; 'for good food, honest wine, a grateful conscience, and a little pleasant chat before a man retires, are worth all the possets and apothecary's drugs. See, sir,' and here he opened a door and ushered Otto into a little white-washed sleeping-room, 'here you are in port. It is small, but it is airy, and the sheets are clean and kept in lavender. The window, too, looks out above the river, and there's no music like a little river's. It plays the same tune (and

that's the favourite) over and over again, and yet does not weary of it like men fiddlers. It takes the mind out of doors: and though we should be grateful for good houses, there is, after all, no house like God's out-of-doors. And lastly, sir, it quiets a man down like saying his prayers. So here, sir, I take my kind leave of you until to-morrow; and it is my prayerful wish that you may slumber like a prince.'

And the old man, with the twentieth courteous inclination, left his guest alone.

CHAPTER III—IN WHICH THE PRINCE COMFORTS AGE AND BEAUTY AND DELIVERS A LECTURE ON DISCRETION IN LOVE

The Prince was early abroad: in the time of the first chorus of birds, of the pure and quiet air, of the slanting sunlight and the mile-long shadows. To one who had passed a miserable night, the freshness of that hour was tonic and reviving; to steal a march upon his slumbering fellows, to be the Adam of the coming day, composed and fortified his spirits; and the Prince, breathing deep and pausing as he went, walked in the wet fields beside his shadow, and was glad.

A trellised path led down into the valley of the brook, and he turned to follow it. The stream was a break-neck, boiling Highland river. Hard by the farm, it leaped a little precipice in a thick grey-mare's tail of twisted filaments, and then lay and worked and bubbled in a lynn. Into the middle of this quaking pool a rock protruded, shelving to a cape; and thither Otto scrambled and sat down to ponder.

Soon the sun struck through the screen of branches and thin early leaves that made a hanging bower above the fall; and the golden lights and flitting shadows fell upon and marbled the surface of that so seething pot; and rays plunged deep among the turning waters; and a spark, as bright as a diamond, lit upon the swaying eddy. It began to grow warm where Otto lingered, warm and heady; the lights swam, weaving their maze

across the shaken pool; on the impending rock, reflections danced like butterflies; and the air was fanned by the waterfall as by a swinging curtain.

Otto, who was weary with tossing and beset with horrid phantoms of remorse and jealousy, instantly fell dead in love with that sun-chequered, echoing corner. Holding his feet, he stared out of a drowsy trance, wondering, admiring, musing, losing his way among uncertain thoughts. There is nothing that so apes the external bearing of free will as that unconscious bustle, obscurely following liquid laws, with which a river contends among obstructions. It seems the very play of man and destiny, and as Otto pored on these recurrent changes, he grew, by equal steps, the sleepier and the more profound. Eddy and Prince were alike jostled in their purpose, alike anchored by intangible influences in one corner of the world. Eddy and Prince were alike useless, starkly useless, in the cosmology of men. Eddy and Prince—Prince and Eddy.

It is probable he had been some while asleep when a voice recalled him from oblivion. 'Sir,' it was saying; and looking round, he saw Mr. Killian's daughter, terrified by her boldness and making bashful signals from the shore. She was a plain, honest lass, healthy and happy and good, and with that sort of beauty that comes of happiness and health. But her confusion lent her for the moment an additional charm.

'Good-morning,' said Otto, rising and moving towards her. 'I arose early and was in a dream.'

'O, sir!' she cried, 'I wish to beg of you to spare my father; for I assure your Highness, if he had known who you was, he would have bitten his tongue out sooner. And Fritz, too—how he went on! But I had a notion; and this morning I went straight down into the stable, and there was your Highness's crown upon the stirrup-irons! But, O, sir, I made certain you would spare them; for they were as innocent as lambs.'

'My dear,' said Otto, both amused and gratified, 'you do not understand. It is I who am in the wrong; for I had no business to conceal my name and lead on these gentleman to speak of me. And it is I who have to beg of you that you will keep my secret and not betray the discourtesy of which I was guilty. As for any fear of me, your friends are safe in Gerolstein; and even in my own territory, you must be well aware I have no power.'

'O, sir,' she said, curtsying, 'I would not say that: the huntsmen would all die for you.'

'Happy Prince!' said Otto. 'But although you are too courteous to avow the knowledge, you have had many opportunities of learning that I am a vain show. Only last night we heard it very clearly stated. You see the shadow flitting on this hard rock? Prince Otto, I am afraid, is but the moving shadow, and the name of the rock is Gondremark. Ah! if your friends had fallen foul of Gondremark! But happily the younger of the two admires him. And as for the old gentleman your father, he is a wise man and an excellent talker, and I would take a long wager he is honest.'

'O, for honest, your Highness, that he is!' exclaimed the girl. 'And Fritz is as honest as he. And as for all they said, it was just talk and nonsense. When countryfolk get gossiping, they go on, I do assure you, for the fun; they don't as much as think of what they say. If you went to the next farm, it's my belief you would hear as much against my father.'

'Nay, nay,' said Otto, 'there you go too fast. For all that was said against Prince Otto—'

'O, it was shameful!' cried the girl.

'Not shameful—true,' returned Otto. 'O, yes—true. I am all they said of me—all that and worse.'

'I never!' cried 'Ottilia. 'Is that how you do? Well, you would never be a soldier. Now if any one accuses me, I get up and give it them. O, I defend myself. I wouldn't take a fault at another person's hands, no, not if I had it on my forehead. And that's what you must do, if you mean to live it out. But, indeed, I never heard such nonsense. I should think you was ashamed of yourself! You're bald, then, I suppose?'

'O no,' said Otto, fairly laughing. 'There I acquit myself: not bald!'

'Well, and good?' pursued the girl. 'Come now, you know you are good, and I'll make you say so . . . Your Highness, I beg your humble pardon.

But there's no disrespect intended. And anyhow, you know you are.'

'Why, now, what am I to say?' replied Otto. 'You are a cook, and excellently well you do it; I embrace the chance of thanking you for the ragout. Well now, have you not seen good food so bedevilled by unskilful cookery that no one could be brought to eat the pudding? That is me, my dear. I am full of good ingredients, but the dish is worthless. I am—I give it you in one word—sugar in the salad.'

'Well, I don't care, you're good,' reiterated Ottilia, a little flushed by having failed to understand.

'I will tell you one thing,' replied Otto: 'You are!'

'Ah, well, that's what they all said of you,' moralised the girl; 'such a tongue to come round—such a flattering tongue!'

'O, you forget, I am a man of middle age,' the Prince chuckled.

'Well, to speak to you, I should think you was a boy; and Prince or no Prince, if you came worrying where I was cooking, I would pin a napkin to your tails. . . . And, O Lord, I declare I hope your Highness will forgive me,' the girl added. 'I can't keep it in my mind.'

'No more can I,' cried Otto. 'That is just what they complain of!'

They made a loverly-looking couple; only the heavy pouring of that

horse-tail of water made them raise their voices above lovers' pitch. But to a jealous onlooker from above, their mirth and close proximity might easily give umbrage; and a rough voice out of a tuft of brambles began calling on Ottilia by name. She changed colour at that. 'It is Fritz,' she said. 'I must go.'

'Go, my dear, and I need not bid you go in peace, for I think you have discovered that I am not formidable at close quarters,' said the Prince, and made her a fine gesture of dismissal.

So Ottilia skipped up the bank, and disappeared into the thicket, stopping once for a single blushing bob—blushing, because she had in the interval once more forgotten and remembered the stranger's quality.

Otto returned to his rock promontory; but his humour had in the meantime changed. The sun now shone more fairly on the pool; and over its brown, welling surface, the blue of heaven and the golden green of the spring foliage danced in fleeting arabesque. The eddies laughed and brightened with essential colour. And the beauty of the dell began to rankle in the Prince's mind; it was so near to his own borders, yet without. He had never had much of the joy of possessorship in any of the thousand and one beautiful and curious things that were his; and now he was conscious of envy for what was another's. It was, indeed, a smiling, dilettante sort of envy; but yet there it was: the passion of Ahab for the vineyard, done in little; and he was relieved when Mr. Killian appeared upon the scene.

'I hope, sir, that you have slept well under my plain roof,' said the old

farmer.

'I am admiring this sweet spot that you are privileged to dwell in,' replied Otto, evading the inquiry.

'It is rustic,' returned Mr. Gottesheim, looking around him with complacency, 'a very rustic corner; and some of the land to the west is most excellent fat land, excellent deep soil. You should see my wheat in the ten-acre field. There is not a farm in Grünewald, no, nor many in Gerolstein, to match the River Farm. Some sixty—I keep thinking when I sow—some sixty, and some seventy, and some an hundredfold; and my own place, six score! But that, sir, is partly the farming.'

'And the stream has fish?' asked Otto.

'A fish-pond,' said the farmer. 'Ay, it is a pleasant bit. It is pleasant even here, if one had time, with the brook drumming in that black pool, and the green things hanging all about the rocks, and, dear heart, to see the very pebbles! all turned to gold and precious stones! But you have come to that time of life, sir, when, if you will excuse me, you must look to have the rheumatism set in. Thirty to forty is, as one may say, their seed-time. And this is a damp cold corner for the early morning and an empty stomach. If I might humbly advise you, sir, I would be moving.'

'With all my heart,' said Otto gravely. 'And so you have lived your life here?' he added, as they turned to go.

'Here I was born,' replied the farmer, 'and here I wish I could say I was to die. But fortune, sir, fortune turns the wheel. They say she is blind, but we will hope she only sees a little farther on. My grandfather and my father and I, we have all tilled these acres, my furrow following theirs. All the three names are on the garden bench, two Killians and one Johann. Yes, sir, good men have prepared themselves for the great change in my old garden. Well do I mind my father, in a woollen night-cap, the good soul, going round and round to see the last of it. 'Killian,' said he, 'do you see the smoke of my tobacco? Why,' said he, 'that is man's life.' It was his last pipe, and I believe he knew it; and it was a strange thing, without doubt, to leave the trees that he had planted, and the son that he had begotten, ay, sir, and even the old pipe with the Turk's head that he had smoked since he was a lad and went a-courting. But here we have no continuing city; and as for the eternal, it's a comfortable thought that we have other merits than our own. And yet you would hardly think how sore it goes against the grain with me, to die in a strange bed.'

'And must you do so? For what reason?' Otto asked.

'The reason? The place is to be sold; three thousand crowns,' replied Mr. Gottesheim. 'Had it been a third of that, I may say without boasting that, what with my credit and my savings, I could have met the sum. But at three thousand, unless I have singular good fortune and the new proprietor continues me in office, there is nothing left me but to budge.'

Otto's fancy for the place redoubled at the news, and became joined with other feelings. If all he heard were true, Grünewald was growing very hot for a sovereign Prince; it might be well to have a refuge; and if so, what more delightful hermitage could man imagine? Mr. Gottesheim, besides, had touched his sympathies. Every man loves in his soul to play the part of the stage deity. And to step down to the aid of the old farmer, who had so roughly handled him in talk, was the ideal of a Fair Revenge. Otto's thoughts brightened at the prospect, and he began to regard himself with a renewed respect.

'I can find you, I believe, a purchaser,' he said, 'and one who would continue to avail himself of your skill.'

'Can you, sir, indeed?' said the old man. 'Well, I shall be heartily obliged; for I begin to find a man may practise resignation all his days, as he takes physic, and not come to like it in the end.'

'If you will have the papers drawn, you may even burthen the purchase with your interest,' said Otto. 'Let it be assured to you through life.'

'Your friend, sir,' insinuated Killian, 'would not, perhaps, care to make the interest reversible? Fritz is a good lad.'

'Fritz is young,' said the Prince dryly; 'he must earn consideration, not inherit.'

'He has long worked upon the place, sir,' insisted Mr. Gottesheim; 'and at my great age, for I am seventy-eight come harvest, it would be a troublesome thought to the proprietor how to fill my shoes. It would be a care spared to assure yourself of Fritz. And I believe he might be tempted by a permanency.'

'The young man has unsettled views,' returned Otto.

'Possibly the purchaser—' began Killian.

A little spot of anger burned in Otto's cheek. 'I am the purchaser,' he said.

'It was what I might have guessed,' replied the farmer, bowing with an aged, obsequious dignity. 'You have made an old man very happy; and I may say, indeed, that I have entertained an angel unawares. Sir, the great people of this world—and by that I mean those who are great in station—if they had only hearts like yours, how they would make the fires burn and the poor sing!'

'I would not judge them hardly, sir,' said Otto. 'We all have our frailties.'

'Truly, sir,' said Mr. Gottesheim, with unction. 'And by what name, sir, am I to address my generous landlord?'

The double recollection of an English traveller, whom he had received the

week before at court, and of an old English rogue called Transome, whom he had known in youth, came pertinently to the Prince's help. 'Transome,' he answered, 'is my name. I am an English traveller. It is, to-day, Tuesday. On Thursday, before noon, the money shall be ready. Let us meet, if you please, in Mittwalden, at the "Morning Star."'

'I am, in all things lawful, your servant to command,' replied the farmer. 'An Englishman! You are a great race of travellers. And has your lordship some experience of land?'

'I have had some interest of the kind before,' returned the Prince; 'not in Gerolstein, indeed. But fortune, as you say, turns the wheel, and I desire to be beforehand with her revolutions.'

'Very right, sir, I am sure,' said Mr. Killian.

They had been strolling with deliberation; but they were now drawing near to the farmhouse, mounting by the trellised pathway to the level of the meadow. A little before them, the sound of voices had been some while audible, and now grew louder and more distinct with every step of their advance. Presently, when they emerged upon the top of the bank, they beheld Fritz and Ottilia some way off; he, very black and bloodshot, emphasising his hoarse speech with the smacking of his fist against his palm; she, standing a little way off in blowsy, voluble distress.

'Dear me!' said Mr. Gottesheim, and made as if he would turn aside.

But Otto went straight towards the lovers, in whose dissension he believed himself to have a share. And, indeed, as soon as he had seen the Prince, Fritz had stood tragic, as if awaiting and defying his approach.

'O, here you are!' he cried, as soon as they were near enough for easy speech. 'You are a man at least, and must reply. What were you after? Why were you two skulking in the bush? God!' he broke out, turning again upon Ottilia, 'to think that I should waste my heart on you!'

'I beg your pardon,' Otto cut in. 'You were addressing me. In virtue of what circumstance am I to render you an account of this young lady's conduct? Are you her father? her brother? her husband?'

'O, sir, you know as well as I,' returned the peasant. 'We keep company, she and I. I love her, and she is by way of loving me; but all shall be above-board, I would have her to know. I have a good pride of my own.'

'Why, I perceive I must explain to you what love is,' said Otto. 'Its measure is kindness. It is very possible that you are proud; but she, too, may have some self-esteem; I do not speak for myself. And perhaps, if your own doings were so curiously examined, you might find it inconvenient to reply.'

'These are all set-offs,' said the young man. 'You know very well that a man is a man, and a woman only a woman. That holds good all over, up and

down. I ask you a question, I ask it again, and here I stand.' He drew a mark and toed it.

'When you have studied liberal doctrines somewhat deeper,' said the Prince, 'you will perhaps change your note. You are a man of false weights and measures, my young friend. You have one scale for women, another for men; one for princes, and one for farmer-folk. On the prince who neglects his wife you can be most severe. But what of the lover who insults his mistress? You use the name of love. I should think this lady might very fairly ask to be delivered from love of such a nature. For if I, a stranger, had been one-tenth part so gross and so discourteous, you would most righteously have broke my head. It would have been in your part, as lover, to protect her from such insolence. Protect her first, then, from yourself.'

'Ay,' quoth Mr. Gottesheim, who had been looking on with his hands behind his tall old back, 'ay, that's Scripture truth.'

Fritz was staggered, not only by the Prince's imperturbable superiority of manner, but by a glimmering consciousness that he himself was in the wrong. The appeal to liberal doctrines had, besides, unmanned him.

'Well,' said he, 'if I was rude, I'll own to it. I meant no ill, and did nothing out of my just rights; but I am above all these old vulgar notions too; and if I spoke sharp, I'll ask her pardon.'

'Freely granted, Fritz,' said Ottilia.

'But all this doesn't answer me,' cried Fritz. 'I ask what you two spoke about. She says she promised not to tell; well, then, I mean to know. Civility is civility, but I'll be no man's gull. I have a right to common justice, if I do keep company!'

'If you will ask Mr. Gottesheim,' replied Otto, 'you will find I have not spent my hours in idleness. I have, since I arose this morning, agreed to buy the farm. So far I will go to satisfy a curiosity which I condemn.'

'O, well, if there was business, that's another matter,' returned Fritz. 'Though it beats me why you could not tell. But, of course, if the gentleman is to buy the farm, I suppose there would naturally be an end.'

'To be sure,' said Mr. Gottesheim, with a strong accent of conviction.

But Ottilia was much braver. 'There now!' she cried in triumph. 'What did I tell you? I told you I was fighting your battles. Now you see! Think shame of your suspicious temper! You should go down upon your bended knees both to that gentleman and me.'

CHAPTER IV—IN WHICH THE PRINCE COLLECTS OPINIONS BY THE WAY

A little before noon Otto, by a triumph of manoeuvring, effected his escape. He was quit in this way of the ponderous gratitude of Mr. Killian, and of the confidential gratitude of poor Ottilia; but of Fritz he was not quit so readily. That young politician, brimming with mysterious glances, offered to lend his convoy as far as to the high-road; and Otto, in fear of some residuary jealousy and for the girl's sake, had not the courage to gainsay him; but he regarded his companion with uneasy glances, and devoutly wished the business at an end. For some time Fritz walked by the mare in silence; and they had already traversed more than half the proposed distance when, with something of a blush, he looked up and opened fire.

'Are you not,' he asked, 'what they call a socialist?'

'Why, no,' returned Otto, 'not precisely what they call so. Why do you ask?'

'I will tell you why,' said the young man. 'I saw from the first that you were a red progressional, and nothing but the fear of old Killian kept you back. And there, sir, you were right: old men are always cowards. But nowadays, you see, there are so many groups: you can never tell how far the likeliest kind of man may be prepared to go; and I was never sure you were one of the strong thinkers, till you hinted about

women and free love.'

'Indeed,' cried Otto, 'I never said a word of such a thing.'

'Not you!' cried Fritz. 'Never a word to compromise! You was sowing seed: ground-bait, our president calls it. But it's hard to deceive me, for I know all the agitators and their ways, and all the doctrines; and between you and me,' lowering his voice, 'I am myself affiliated. O yes, I am a secret society man, and here is my medal.' And drawing out a green ribbon that he wore about his neck, he held up, for Otto's inspection, a pewter medal bearing the imprint of a Phoenix and the legend Libertas. 'And so now you see you may trust me,' added Fritz, 'I am none of your alehouse talkers; I am a convinced revolutionary.' And he looked meltingly upon Otto.

'I see,' replied the Prince; 'that is very gratifying. Well, sir, the great thing for the good of one's country is, first of all, to be a good man. All springs from there. For my part, although you are right in thinking that I have to do with politics, I am unfit by intellect and temper for a leading rôle. I was intended, I fear, for a subaltern. Yet we have all something to command, Mr. Fritz, if it be only our own temper; and a man about to marry must look closely to himself. The husband's, like the prince's, is a very artificial standing; and it is hard to be kind in either. Do you follow that?'

'O yes, I follow that,' replied the young man, sadly chop-fallen over the nature of the information he had elicited; and then brightening up: 'Is

it,' he ventured, 'is it for an arsenal that you have bought the farm?'

'We'll see about that,' the Prince answered, laughing. 'You must not be too zealous. And in the meantime, if I were you, I would say nothing on the subject.'

'O, trust me, sir, for that,' cried Fritz, as he pocketed a crown. 'And you've let nothing out; for I suspected—I might say I knew it—from the first. And mind you, when a guide is required,' he added, 'I know all the forest paths.'

Otto rode away, chuckling. This talk with Fritz had vastly entertained him; nor was he altogether discontented with his bearing at the farm; men, he was able to tell himself, had behaved worse under smaller provocation. And, to harmonise all, the road and the April air were both delightful to his soul.

Up and down, and to and fro, ever mounting through the wooded foothills, the broad white high-road wound onward into Grünewald. On either hand the pines stood coolly rooted—green moss prospering, springs welling forth between their knuckled spurs; and though some were broad and stalwart, and others spiry and slender, yet all stood firm in the same attitude and with the same expression, like a silent army presenting arms.

The road lay all the way apart from towns and villages, which it left on either hand. Here and there, indeed, in the bottom of green glens, the

Prince could spy a few congregated roofs, or perhaps above him, on a shoulder, the solitary cabin of a woodman. But the highway was an international undertaking and with its face set for distant cities, scorned the little life of Grünewald. Hence it was exceeding solitary. Near the frontier Otto met a detachment of his own troops marching in the hot dust; and he was recognised and somewhat feebly cheered as he rode by. But from that time forth and for a long while he was alone with the great woods.

Gradually the spell of pleasure relaxed; his own thoughts returned, like stinging insects, in a cloud; and the talk of the night before, like a shower of buffets, fell upon his memory. He looked east and west for any comforter; and presently he was aware of a cross-road coming steeply down hill, and a horseman cautiously descending. A human voice or presence, like a spring in the desert, was now welcome in itself, and Otto drew bridle to await the coming of this stranger. He proved to be a very red-faced, thick-lipped countryman, with a pair of fat saddle-bags and a stone bottle at his waist; who, as soon as the Prince hailed him, jovially, if somewhat thickly, answered. At the same time he gave a beery yaw in the saddle. It was clear his bottle was no longer full.

'Do you ride towards Mittwalden?' asked the Prince.

'As far as the cross-road to Tannenbrunn,' the man replied. 'Will you bear company?'

'With pleasure. I have even waited for you on the chance,' answered

Otto.

By this time they were close alongside; and the man, with the countryfolk instinct, turned his cloudy vision first of all on his companion's mount. 'The devil!' he cried. 'You ride a bonny mare, friend!' And then, his curiosity being satisfied about the essential, he turned his attention to that merely secondary matter, his companion's face. He started. 'The Prince!' he cried, saluting, with another yaw that came near dismounting him. 'I beg your pardon, your Highness, not to have recognised you at once.'

The Prince was vexed out of his self-possession. 'Since you know me,' he said, 'it is unnecessary we should ride together. I will precede you, if you please.' And he was about to set spur to the grey mare, when the half-drunken fellow, reaching over, laid his hand upon the rein.

'Hark you,' he said, 'prince or no prince, that is not how one man should conduct himself with another. What! You'll ride with me incog. and set me talking! But if I know you, you'll preshede me, if you please! Spy!' And the fellow, crimson with drink and injured vanity, almost spat the word into the Prince's face.

A horrid confusion came over Otto. He perceived that he had acted rudely, grossly presuming on his station. And perhaps a little shiver of physical alarm mingled with his remorse, for the fellow was very powerful and not more than half in the possession of his senses. 'Take your hand from my rein,' he said, with a sufficient assumption of command; and when

the man, rather to his wonder, had obeyed: 'You should understand, sir,' he added, 'that while I might be glad to ride with you as one person of sagacity with another, and so receive your true opinions, it would amuse me very little to hear the empty compliments you would address to me as Prince.'

'You think I would lie, do you?' cried the man with the bottle, purpling deeper.

'I know you would,' returned Otto, entering entirely into his self-possession. 'You would not even show me the medal you wear about your neck.' For he had caught a glimpse of a green ribbon at the fellow's throat.

The change was instantaneous: the red face became mottled with yellow: a thick-fingered, tottering hand made a clutch at the tell-tale ribbon. 'Medal!' the man cried, wonderfully sobered. 'I have no medal.'

'Pardon me,' said the Prince. 'I will even tell you what that medal bears: a Phoenix burning, with the word Libertas.' The medallist remaining speechless, 'You are a pretty fellow,' continued Otto, smiling, 'to complain of incivility from the man whom you conspire to murder.'

'Murder!' protested the man. 'Nay, never that; nothing criminal for me!'

'You are strangely misinformed,' said Otto. 'Conspiracy itself is criminal, and ensures the pain of death. Nay, sir, death it is; I will

guarantee my accuracy. Not that you need be so deplorably affected, for I am no officer. But those who mingle with politics should look at both sides of the medal.'

'Your Highness . . . ' began the knight of the bottle.

'Nonsense! you are a Republican,' cried Otto; 'what have you to do with highnesses? But let us continue to ride forward. Since you so much desire it, I cannot find it in my heart to deprive you of my company. And for that matter, I have a question to address to you. Why, being so great a body of men—for you are a great body—fifteen thousand, I have heard, but that will be understated; am I right?'

The man gurgled in his throat.

'Why, then, being so considerable a party,' resumed Otto, 'do you not come before me boldly with your wants?—what do I say? with your commands?
Have I the name of being passionately devoted to my throne? I can scarce suppose it. Come, then; show me your majority, and I will instantly resign. Tell this to your friends; assure them from me of my docility; assure them that, however they conceive of my deficiencies, they cannot suppose me more unfit to be a ruler than I do myself. I am one of the worst princes in Europe; will they improve on that?'

'Far be it from me . . .' the man began.

‘See, now, if you will not defend my government!’ cried Otto. ‘If I were you, I would leave conspiracies. You are as little fit to be a conspirator as I to be a king.’

‘One thing I will say out,’ said the man. ‘It is not so much you that we complain of, it’s your lady.’

‘Not a word, sir’ said the Prince; and then after a moment’s pause, and in tones of some anger and contempt: ‘I once more advise you to have done with politics,’ he added; ‘and when next I see you, let me see you sober. A morning drunkard is the last man to sit in judgment even upon the worst of princes.’

‘I have had a drop, but I had not been drinking,’ the man replied, triumphing in a sound distinction. ‘And if I had, what then? Nobody hangs by me. But my mill is standing idle, and I blame it on your wife. Am I alone in that? Go round and ask. Where are the mills? Where are the young men that should be working? Where is the currency? All paralysed. No, sir, it is not equal; for I suffer for your faults—I pay for them, by George, out of a poor man’s pocket. And what have you to do with mine? Drunk or sober, I can see my country going to hell, and I can see whose fault it is. And so now, I’ve said my say, and you may drag me to a stinking dungeon; what care I? I’ve spoke the truth, and so I’ll hold hard, and not intrude upon your Highness’s society.’

And the miller reined up and, clumsily enough, saluted.

'You will observe, I have not asked your name,' said Otto. 'I wish you a good ride,' and he rode on hard. But let him ride as he pleased, this interview with the miller was a chokepear, which he could not swallow. He had begun by receiving a reproof in manners, and ended by sustaining a defeat in logic, both from a man whom he despised. All his old thoughts returned with fresher venom. And by three in the afternoon, coming to the cross-roads for Beckstein, Otto decided to turn aside and dine there leisurely. Nothing at least could be worse than to go on as he was going.

In the inn at Beckstein he remarked, immediately upon his entrance, an intelligent young gentleman dining, with a book in front of him. He had his own place laid close to the reader, and with a proper apology, broke ground by asking what he read.

'I am perusing,' answered the young gentleman, 'the last work of the Herr Doctor Hohenstockwitz, cousin and librarian of your Prince here in Grünewald—a man of great erudition and some lambencies of wit.'

'I am acquainted,' said Otto, 'with the Herr Doctor, though not yet with his work.'

'Two privileges that I must envy you,' replied the young man politely: 'an honour in hand, a pleasure in the bush.'

'The Herr Doctor is a man much respected, I believe, for his attainments?' asked the Prince.

'He is, sir, a remarkable instance of the force of intellect,' replied the reader. 'Who of our young men know anything of his cousin, all reigning Prince although he be? Who but has heard of Doctor Gotthold? But intellectual merit, alone of all distinctions, has its base in nature.'

'I have the gratification of addressing a student—perhaps an author?' Otto suggested.

The young man somewhat flushed. 'I have some claim to both distinctions, sir, as you suppose,' said he; 'there is my card. I am the licentiate Roederer, author of several works on the theory and practice of politics.'

'You immensely interest me,' said the Prince; 'the more so as I gather that here in Grünewald we are on the brink of revolution. Pray, since these have been your special studies, would you augur hopefully of such a movement?'

'I perceive,' said the young author, with a certain vinegary twitch, 'that you are unacquainted with my opuscula. I am a convinced authoritarian. I share none of those illusory, Utopian fancies with which empirics blind themselves and exasperate the ignorant. The day of these ideas is, believe me, past, or at least passing.'

'When I look about me—' began Otto.

'When you look about you,' interrupted the licentiate, 'you behold the ignorant. But in the laboratory of opinion, beside the studious lamp, we begin already to discard these figments. We begin to return to nature's order, to what I might call, if I were to borrow from the language of therapeutics, the expectant treatment of abuses. You will not misunderstand me,' he continued: 'a country in the condition in which we find Grünewald, a prince such as your Prince Otto, we must explicitly condemn; they are behind the age. But I would look for a remedy not to brute convulsions, but to the natural supervenience of a more able sovereign. I should amuse you, perhaps,' added the licentiate, with a smile, 'I think I should amuse you if I were to explain my notion of a prince. We who have studied in the closet, no longer, in this age, propose ourselves for active service. The paths, we have perceived, are incompatible. I would not have a student on the throne, though I would have one near by for an adviser. I would set forward as prince a man of a good, medium understanding, lively rather than deep; a man of courtly manner, possessed of the double art to ingratiate and to command; receptive, accommodating, seductive. I have been observing you since your first entrance. Well, sir, were I a subject of Grünewald I should pray heaven to set upon the seat of government just such another as yourself.'

'The devil you would!' exclaimed the Prince.

The licentiate Roederer laughed most heartily. 'I thought I should astonish you,' he said. 'These are not the ideas of the masses.'

'They are not, I can assure you,' Otto said.

'Or rather,' distinguished the licentiate, 'not to-day. The time will come, however, when these ideas shall prevail.'

'You will permit me, sir, to doubt it,' said Otto.

'Modesty is always admirable,' chuckled the theorist. 'But yet I assure you, a man like you, with such a man as, say, Doctor Gotthold at your elbow, would be, for all practical issues, my ideal ruler.'

At this rate the hours sped pleasantly for Otto. But the licentiate unfortunately slept that night at Beckstein, where he was, being dainty in the saddle and given to half stages. And to find a convoy to Mittwalden, and thus mitigate the company of his own thoughts, the Prince had to make favour with a certain party of wood-merchants from various states of the empire, who had been drinking together somewhat noisily at the far end of the apartment.

The night had already fallen when they took the saddle. The merchants were very loud and mirthful; each had a face like a nor'west moon; and they played pranks with each others' horses, and mingled songs and choruses, and alternately remembered and forgot the companion of their ride. Otto thus combined society and solitude, hearkening now to their chattering and empty talk, now to the voices of the encircling forest. The starlit dark, the faint wood airs, the clank of the horse-shoes

making broken music, accorded together and attuned his mind. And he was still in a most equal temper when the party reached the top of that long hill that overlooks Mittwalden.

Down in the bottom of a bowl of forest, the lights of the little formal town glittered in a pattern, street crossing street; away by itself on the right, the palace was glowing like a factory.

Although he knew not Otto, one of the wood-merchants was a native of the state. 'There,' said he, pointing to the palace with his whip, 'there is Jezebel's inn.'

'What, do you call it that?' cried another, laughing.

'Ay, that's what they call it,' returned the Grünewalder; and he broke into a song, which the rest, as people well acquainted with the words and air, instantly took up in chorus. Her Serene Highness Amalia Seraphina, Princess of Grünewald, was the heroine, Gondremark the hero of this ballad. Shame hissed in Otto's ears. He reined up short and sat stunned in the saddle; and the singers continued to descend the hill without him.

The song went to a rough, swashing, popular air; and long after the words became inaudible the swing of the music, rising and falling, echoed insult in the Prince's brain. He fled the sounds. Hard by him on his right a road struck towards the palace, and he followed it through the thick shadows and branching alleys of the park. It was a busy place on a fine summer's afternoon, when the court and burghers met and saluted; but

at that hour of the night in the early spring it was deserted to the roosting birds. Hares rustled among the covert; here and there a statue stood glimmering, with its eternal gesture; here and there the echo of an imitation temple clattered ghostly to the trampling of the mare. Ten minutes brought him to the upper end of his own home garden, where the small stables opened, over a bridge, upon the park. The yard clock was striking the hour of ten; so was the big bell in the palace bell-tower; and, farther off, the belfries of the town. About the stable all else was silent but the stamping of stalled horses and the rattle of halters. Otto dismounted; and as he did so a memory came back to him: a whisper of dishonest grooms and stolen corn, once heard, long forgotten, and now recurring in the nick of opportunity. He crossed the bridge, and, going up to a window, knocked six or seven heavy blows in a particular cadence, and, as he did so, smiled. Presently a wicket was opened in the gate, and a man's head appeared in the dim starlight.

'Nothing to-night,' said a voice.

'Bring a lantern,' said the Prince.

'Dear heart a' mercy!' cried the groom. 'Who's that?'

'It is I, the Prince,' replied Otto. 'Bring a lantern, take in the mare, and let me through into the garden.'

The man remained silent for a while, his head still projecting through

the wicket.

'His Highness!' he said at last. 'And why did your Highness knock so strange?'

'It is a superstition in Mittwalden,' answered Otto, 'that it cheapens corn.'

With a sound like a sob the groom fled. He was very white when he returned, even by the light of the lantern; and his hand trembled as he undid the fastenings and took the mare.

'Your Highness,' he began at last, 'for God's sake . . . ' And there he paused, oppressed with guilt.

'For God's sake, what?' asked Otto cheerfully. 'For God's sake let us have cheaper corn, say I. Good-night!' And he strode off into the garden, leaving the groom petrified once more.

The garden descended by a succession of stone terraces to the level of the fish-pond. On the far side the ground rose again, and was crowned by the confused roofs and gables of the palace. The modern pillared front, the ball-room, the great library, the princely apartments, the busy and illuminated quarters of that great house, all faced the town. The garden side was much older; and here it was almost dark; only a few windows quietly lighted at various elevations. The great square tower rose, thinning by stages like a telescope; and on the top of all the flag hung

motionless.

The garden, as it now lay in the dusk and glimmer of the starshine, breathed of April violets. Under night's cavern arch the shrubs obscurely bustled. Through the plotted terraces and down the marble stairs the Prince rapidly descended, fleeing before uncomfortable thoughts. But, alas! from these there is no city of refuge. And now, when he was about midway of the descent, distant strains of music began to fall upon his ear from the ball-room, where the court was dancing. They reached him faint and broken, but they touched the keys of memory; and through and above them Otto heard the ranting melody of the wood-merchants' song. Mere blackness seized upon his mind. Here he was, coming home; the wife was dancing, the husband had been playing a trick upon a lackey; and meanwhile, all about them, they were a by-word to their subjects. Such a prince, such a husband, such a man, as this Otto had become! And he sped the faster onward.

Some way below he came unexpectedly upon a sentry; yet a little farther, and he was challenged by a second; and as he crossed the bridge over the fish-pond, an officer making the rounds stopped him once more. The parade of watch was more than usual; but curiosity was dead in Otto's mind, and he only chafed at the interruption. The porter of the back postern admitted him, and started to behold him so disordered. Thence, hasting by private stairs and passages, he came at length unseen to his own chamber, tore off his clothes, and threw himself upon his bed in the dark. The music of the ball-room still continued to a very lively measure; and still, behind that, he heard in spirit the chorus of the

merchants clanking down the hill.

BOOK II—OF LOVE AND POLITICS

CHAPTER I—WHAT HAPPENED IN THE LIBRARY

At a quarter before six on the following morning Doctor Gotthold was already at his desk in the library; and with a small cup of black coffee at his elbow, and an eye occasionally wandering to the busts and the long array of many-coloured books, was quietly reviewing the labours of the day before. He was a man of about forty, flaxen-haired, with refined features a little worn, and bright eyes somewhat faded. Early to bed and early to rise, his life was devoted to two things: erudition and Rhine wine. An ancient friendship existed latent between him and Otto; they rarely met, but when they did it was to take up at once the thread of their suspended intimacy. Gotthold, the virgin priest of knowledge, had envied his cousin, for half a day, when he was married; he had never envied him his throne.

Reading was not a popular diversion at the court of Grünewald; and that great, pleasant, sunshiny gallery of books and statues was, in practice, Gotthold's private cabinet. On this particular Wednesday morning,