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JENNIE BAXTER: JOURNALIST

BY ROBERT BARR.

III.—The Duchess of Chiselhurst's Ball.

(Copyright, 1900, by Robert Barr.) (Continued.)

Her rapidly beating heart had now opportunity to lessen its pulsations, and as she soon found that she was practically unnoticed her natural calmness began to return to her.



There was no recognition in the large frightened eyes.

Five memory the various particulars of so unaccustomed a spectacle, whose very unfamiliarity made the greater impression on the girl's mind.

There was no recognition in the large frightened eyes that were turned upon him. They saw a young man bowing low over the unresisting hand he had taken.

"Put not your trust in princesses," she murmured, a sparkle of latent mischief lighting up her eyes.

The young man laughed. "Indeed," he said, "had I served my country as faithfully as I have been true to my remembrance of you, princess, I would have been an ambassador long ere this, covered with decorations. Have you, then, lost all recollection of that winter in Washington five years ago, that whirlwind of gaiety which ended by wafting you away to a foreign country, so that the eventful season clings to my memory as if it were a disastrous western cyclone?"

Her fan concealed the lower part of the girl's face, and she looked at him over its fleecy semicircle.

"I am disconsolate to see that I am indeed forgotten, princess, and so another cherished delusion fades away from me."

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

her fan and giving him for the first time a full view of her face.

"The young man seemed for a moment perplexed, but she went on, giving him little time for reflection."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Ah, princess, it is very easy for you to treat these serious matters lightly! He laughs at scars who never felt a wound. Time, being, above all things, treacherous, often leaves the face untouched the more effectually to scar the heart. The hurt concealed is ever the most dangerous."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

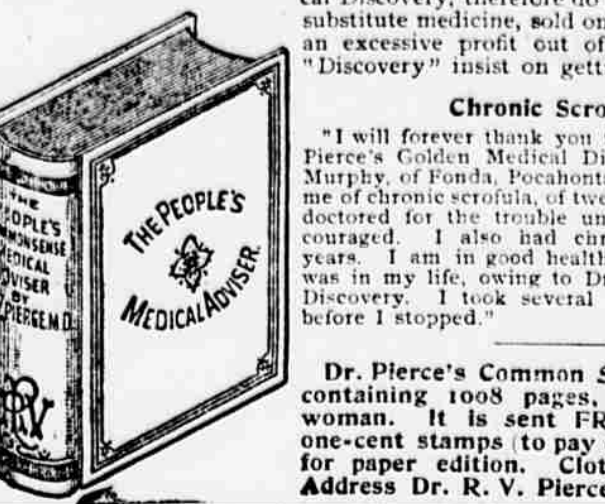
reverse of that is the case. We sit humbly at your feet, ambitious to emulate, but without hope of excelling."

"The old man chuckled again, and, turning to the girl, began to make his adieu."

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To suffer with skin disease than it is for a man, for a smooth skin and a clear complexion are essential elements of female beauty. So-called skin diseases are in general blood diseases, because they are commonly the result of an impure condition of the blood.



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