

Lancaster Intelligencer.

THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 28, 1881.

FROM STEP TO STEP;

Or, The Mysterious Letter.

From the German of Ernst Fritze. Translated Especially for the INTELLIGENCER. (Continued.)

CHAPTER III. Felix Markin reached the Residence without much difficulty. It was not evening when the young man stepped out of the diligence, and drove in a fiacre to the well known hotel "Unter den Linden."

"Yes," was the young man's impatient reply. "Yes, in the front; for I have not come to the Residence to look at the dog-kennels, wagon sheds and horse stables of an inn-yard! At the same time, bring me a half bottle of champagne, 'Sack' as the great Falstaff says, and a directory."

"At your service," returned the ministering spirit of the hotel, with a more marked degree of courtesy. Felix rubbed his hands together in great satisfaction. "Things are the same here with us—must bring these water-souls to a consciousness of one's importance!"

"Who lives there?" "Since the decease of his excellency, only his widow. It is said that she remains in possession of life."

"Quite naturally since she is the heiress of his excellency," said Felix indifferently. The cork, at this moment, flew noiselessly into the air, Felix held out his glass—he drew it back filled with the sparkling, fragrant foam, and exhaled it at a draught.

"Famous!" he exclaimed, recovering breath. "There is nothing more refreshing in summer than champagne. Apropos—is the sick Lady Haidek in years?"

"Not over forty," they say. His excellency was much taller than his wife. The waiter took his leave with a courteous bow. Felix greedily emptied a second glass. "So, name and residence of the lady are already found," said he to himself.

"Next day the young man spent the first hours of the morning in providing himself with suitable clothing in which to make his intended visit to the distinguished lady. He had sufficient tact to discard all ornament and jewelry, and to dress in a simple and clean style of dress."

"What is it, John?" asked Lady Von Haidek, who, leaning back in the chair, had closed her eyes through faintness.

"A strange gentleman wishes to wait upon her excellency."

"It is like him! he is noble-minded enough to be unwilling to accuse any one, but he is also stubborn, and he scarcely doubts the truth of his statement. It might readily be believed of the prodigal and unprincipled youth, who never gave thought to his expenses, that he should have forgotten everything in the infatuation of play; but that he spoke of it repeatedly, that he accused himself, that he swore by heaven and earth never again to think of a journey to the Residence; all these things aroused her suspicions."

"Who, then, is the gentleman that prevailed upon you to interrupt your journey half way?" she inquired politely. "I had wished to betray his name, I should not have waited for this question," returned Felix, calmly; "stand by me, at least, to soothe my father's anger."

"How, why should Herr Markin be particularly angry?" exclaimed madame, derisively. "He surely knows what he may expect of you."

"At this moment the old gentleman entered the house, saw his son in the sitting room, and said to him, 'Felix, you are already here? What must I conclude from this? Have you made such a brilliant stroke of business?' Or, was the letter of no account?" he called out briskly.

"Felix, look at the packet, that he had just related to Madame Spalding. Herr Markin frowned angrily. 'I might have known that your sole intention was to swindle me out of the money. It was foolish of me to take the bait of such a letter. Take, care misguided boy; that you do not exhaust my patience! If I am forced to the conclusion that nothing is to be done with you, I shall dismiss you from the firm, and carry on the business alone.'"

"O, dear father," interrupted Felix, "that would just suit me." A house in the Black-Forest that deals in hops wishes to have an agent for this part of country, and is ready to transfer this agency to me. Will you release me for a few weeks, by way of experiment?"

"With pleasure! The business can do without you, since you have no taste for the business." With these words he turned away and passed into the adjoining room.

"Where is your trunk, Herr Felix?" now interposed Frau Spalding, "I would like to unpack it." "All in good time, madame," was the peevish reply of the young man as he reached after the key and betook himself to his sleeping room.

Frau Spalding looked after him with a malicious smile. "There is something wrong here! In the first place, the letter—what were its contents? And now, this hop business? Only wait, Herr Felix, I shall soon find out what all these stories signify!"

Felix, however, believed to have drawn himself perfectly well from this affair. He strode back and forth in the room, rubbing his hands with delight. At length he sat himself to examine into the contents of the packet. This bore the inscription, "Herr O. Markin," was not at all events intended for him, but for another Markin whose first name also began with an "O." A wonderful change!

The valuable papers he found in the packet far surpassed his wildest expectations and startled him exceedingly. Such a gift was totally inexcusable, if not justified by legal claims on the part of him who had received it. Felix, now feeling fully satisfied, put aside all scruples of conscience and applied himself to the task of concealing this great wealth, so as to elude discovery, until a favorable time should be presented for realizing it.

Here also his cunning stood him in good stead; he found a place of concealment which even the inquisitive spirit of Madame Spalding would be unable to detect. (To be Continued.)

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