

THE KING'S MIRROR.*

BY ANTHONY HOPE.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS ALREADY PUBLISHED.

THIS is the story of the life of a young king, Augustin, as told by himself, and the principal characters in his little drama are his mother, the Princess Heinrich; his sister, the Princess Victoria, who is Augustin's elder by two years; and the Prince von Hammerfeldt, an old statesman and diplomatist, who is really the dominating force in the young king's domains. As the years roll by Augustin finds himself more and more disillusioned of his boyish dreams of kingly power; his position prevents him from acquiring any real friends, his cherished plans are continually thwarted, and restrictions hedge him in on every side. When he is eighteen he goes on a foreign tour, and while visiting the Bartensteins, who are distant relatives of his, living in Tyrol, he is given to understand that the duke's daughter Elsa, a child of twelve, is destined eventually to be his bride. On his return to Forstadt, he spends his time mastering his public duties under Hammerfeldt's tuition and playing a prominent part in the gaieties of the capital. Here he becomes an object of contention between the conservative and liberal parties of the kingdom—the Right and the Left. One of the leading spirits in the liberal forces is the Countess von Sempach, the American wife of a German nobleman, who had won Augustin's affection by her kindness to him, when he was a child. She is a brilliant and beautiful woman of twenty eight now, but despite the difference in their ages, the young king becomes very fond of her and pays her marked attention.

IX (*Continued*).

WE were sitting by the fire one evening in the twilight; she was playing with a hand screen, but suffering the flames to paint her face and throw into relief the sensitive, merry lips and the eyes so full of varied meanings. She had told me to go and I had not gone; she leaned back, and after one glance of reproach fixed her regard on the polished tip of her shoe that rested on the fender. She meant that she would talk no more to me, that in her estimation, since I had no business to stay, I was already gone. An impulse seized me. I do not know what I hoped, nor why that moment broke the silence which I had imposed on myself; but I told her about the little, fair, chubby child at the castle of Bartenstein. I watched her closely, but the eyes never strayed from her shoe tip. Well, she had never said a word that showed any concern in such a matter; even I had done little more than look and hint and come.

"It's as if they meant me to marry Toté," I ended. "Toté" was the pet name by which we called her own eight year old daughter.

The countess broke her wilful silence, but did not change the direction of her eyes.

"If Toté were of the proper station," she said ironically, "she would be just

right for you by the time you are both grown up."

"And you'd be mother in law?"

"I should be too old to plague you. I should just sit in my corner in the sun."

"The sun is always in your corner."

"Don't be so complimentary," she said, with a sudden twitching of her lips. "I shall have to stand up and courtesy, and I don't want to. Besides, you oughtn't to know how to say things like that, ought you, Cæsar?"

Cæsar was my—shall I say pet name?—used when we were alone or with Count Max only, in a playful satire.

A silence followed for some time. At last she glanced towards me.

"Not gone yet?" said she, raising her brows. "What will the princess say?"

"I go when I please," said I, resenting the question as I was meant to resent it.

"Yes. Certainly not when I please."

Our eyes met now. Suddenly she blushed, and then interposed the screen between herself and me. A glorious thrill of youthful triumph ran through me; she had paid her first tribute to my manhood in that blush; the offering was small, but, for its significance, frankincense and myrrh to me.

"I thought you came to talk about Wetter's bill," she suggested presently, in a voice lower than her usual tones.

"The deuce take Wetter's bill!" said I.

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"I am very interested in it."

"Just now?"

"Even just now, Cæsar." I heard a little laugh behind the screen.

"Hammerfeldt hates it," said I.

"Oh, then, that settles it. You'll be against us, of course!"

"Why of course?"

"You always do as the prince tells you, don't you?"

"Unless somebody more powerful forbids me."

"Who is more powerful — except Cæsar himself?"

I made no answer, but I rose and, crossing the rug, stood by her. I remember the look and the feel of the room very well; she lay back in a low chair, upholstered in blue; the firelight, forbidden her face, played on the hand that held the screen, flushing its white to red. I could see her hair gleaming in the fantastically varying light that the flames gave as they leaped and fell. I was in a tumult of excitement and timidity.

"More powerful than Cæsar?" I asked, and my voice shook.

"Don't call yourself Cæsar."

"Why not?"

There was a momentary hesitation before the answer came low:

"Because you mustn't laugh at yourself. I may laugh at you, but you mustn't laugh at yourself."

I wondered at the words, the tone, the strange diffidence that infected even a speech so full of her gay bravery. A moment later she added a reason for her command:

"You're so absurd that you mustn't laugh at yourself. And, Cæsar, if you stay any longer or — come again soon, other people will laugh at you."

To this day I do not know whether she meant to give a genuine warning or to strike a chord that should sound back defiance.

"If ten thousand of them laugh, what is it to me? They dare laugh only behind my back," I said.

She laughed before my face; the screen fell and she laughed, saying softly, "Cæsar, Cæsar!"

I was wonderfully happy in my perturbation. The great charm she had for me was today less than ever before alloyed by the sense of rawness which she above all others could compel me to feel.

Today she herself was not wholly calm, not mistress of herself without a struggle, without her moments of faintness. Yet now she appeared composed again, and there was nothing but merriment in her eyes. She seemed to have forgotten that I was supposed to be gone. I dare say that not to her, any more than to myself, could I seem quite like an ordinary boy; perhaps the more I forgot what was peculiar about me, the more she remembered it, my oblivion seeming to point her triumph.

"And the princess?" she asked, laughing still, but now again a little nervously.

My exultation, finding vent in mischief and impelled by curiosity, drove me to a venture.

"I shall tell the princess that I kissed you," said I.

The countess suddenly sat upright.

"And that you kissed me — several times," I continued.

"How dare you?" she cried in a whisper, and her cheeks flamed in blushes and in firelight. My little device was a triumph. I began to laugh.

"Oh, of course, if she asks me when," I added, "I shall confess that it was ten years ago."

Many emotions mingled in my companion's glance as she sank back in her chair; she was indignant at the trap, amused at having been caught in it, not fully relieved from embarrassment, not wholly convinced that the explanation of my daring speech covered all the intent with which it had been uttered, perhaps not desirous of being convinced too thoroughly. A long pause followed. Timidity held me back from further advance. For that evening enough seemed to have passed. I had made a start; to go further might be to risk all. I was about to take my leave when she looked up again, saying:

"And about Wetter's bill, Cæsar?"

"You know I can do nothing."

"Can Cæsar do nothing? If you were known to favor it, fifty votes would be changed." Her face was eager and animated. I looked down at her and smiled. She flushed again, and cried hastily:

"No, no, never mind; at least, not to-night."

I suppose that my smile persisted and was not a mirthful one. It stirred anger and resentment in her.

"I know why you're smiling," she exclaimed. "I suppose that when I was kind to you as a baby I wanted something from you, too, did I?"

She had detected the thought that had come so inevitably into my mind: that she should resent it so passionately almost persuaded me of its injustice. I turned from it to the pleasant memory of her earlier impulsive kindness. I put out my hands and grasped hers. She let me hold them for an instant and then drew them away. She gave rather a forced laugh.

"You're too young to be bothered about bills," she said, "and too young for—for all sorts of other things, too. Run away; never mind me with my bills and my wrinkles."

"Your wrinkles!"

"Oh, if not now, in a year or two; by the time you're ready to marry Elsa."

As she spoke she rose and stood facing me. A new sense of her beauty came over me; her beauty's tragedy, already before her eyes, was to me remote and impossible. Because it was not yet very near she exaggerated its nearness; because it was inevitable I turned away from it. Indeed, who could remember, seeing her then? Who, save herself, as she looked on my youth?

"You'll soon be old and ugly?" I asked, laughing.

"Yes, soon; it will seem very soon to you."

"What's the moral?" said I.

She laughed uneasily, twisting the screen in her hands. For an instant she raised her eyes to mine, and as they dropped again she whispered:

"A short life and a merry one."

My hand flew out to her again; she took it and, after a laughing glance, courted low over it, as though in formal farewell. I had not meant that, and laughed in my turn.

"I shan't be old—well, by tomorrow," she murmured, and glanced ostentatiously at the clock.

"May I come tomorrow?"

"I never invite you."

"Shall you be here?"

"It's not one of my receiving days."

"I like a good chance better than a poor certainty. At least, there will be nobody else here."

"Max, perhaps."

"I don't think so."

"You don't think so? What do you mean by that, Cæsar? No, I don't want to know. I believe it was impertinent. Are you going?"

"Yes," said I, "when I have kissed your hand."

She said nothing, but held it out to me. She smiled, but there seemed to me to be pain in her eyes. I pressed her hand to my lips and went out without speaking again. As I closed the door I heard her fling herself back into her chair with a curious little sound, half cry, half sigh.

I left the house quickly and silently; no servant was summoned to escort me. I walked a few yards along the street to where Wetter lived. My carriage was ordered to come for me at Wetter's; it had not yet arrived. To be known to visit Wetter was to accept the blame of a smaller indiscretion as the price of hiding a greater. The deputy was at home, writing in his study; he received me with an admirable unconsciousness of where I had come from. I was still in a state of excitement and was glad to sit smoking quietly while his animated, fluent talk ran on. He was full of this bill of his, and explained its provisions to me with the air of desiring that I should understand its spirit and aim, and of being willing then to leave it to my candid consideration. He did not attempt to blink the difficulties.

"Of course we have the prince and all the party of Reaction against us," he said; "but your majesty is not a member of any party."

"Not even of yours yet," said I, with a laugh.

He laughed in his turn, openly and merrily.

"I'm a poor schemer," he said; "but I don't know why it should be wrong for you to hear my views, any more than Hammerfeldt's."

The servant entered and announced the arrival of my carriage. Wetter escorted me to it.

"I'll promise not to mention the bill if you'll honor me by coming again, sire," he said, as he held the brougham door.

"I shall be delighted to come again; I like to hear about it," I answered. His bow and smile conveyed absolutely nothing but a respectful gratification and a friendly pleasure. Yet he knew that the situation of his house was more respon-

sible for my visit than the interest of his projects.

In part I saw clear enough even at this time. It was the design and hope of Wetter and his friends to break down Hammerfeldt's power and obtain a political influence over me. Hammerfeldt's political dominance seemed to them to be based on a personal ascendancy; this they must contrive to match. Their instrument was not far to seek. The countess was ready to their hands, a beautiful woman, sharpest weapon of all in such a strife. They put her forward against the prince in the fight whereof I was the prize. All this I saw; against it all I was forewarned and forearmed. Knowledge gave security. But there was more, and here with the failure of insight safety was compromised. What was her mind? What was her part—not as it seemed to these busy politicians, but as her own heart taught it her? Here came to me the excitement of uncertainty, the impulse of youth, the prick of vanity, the longing for that intimate love of which my life had given me so little. Was I to her also only something to be used in the game of politics, a tool that she, a defter tool, must shape and point before it could be of use?

I tried to say this to myself and to make a barrier of the knowledge. But was it all the truth? Remembering her eyes and tones, her words and hesitations, I could not accept it for the whole truth. There was more, what more I knew not. Even if there had been no more, I was falling so deep into the gulf of passion that it crossed my mind to take while I gave, and if I were to be used, to exact my hire. In a tumult of these thoughts, embracing now what in the next moment I rejected, revolting in a sudden fear from the plan which just before had seemed so attractive, I passed the evening and the night. For I had taken up that mixed heritage of good and evil, of pain and power, that goes by the name of manhood, and when a new heir enters on his inheritance there is a time before he can order it.

X.

A FEW days later my mother informed me that Victoria and her husband had proposed to pay us a long visit. I could

make no objection. Princess Heinrich observed that I should be glad to see Victoria again and should enjoy the companionship of William Adolphus. In my mind I translated her speech into a declaration that Victoria might have some influence over me, although my mother had none, and that William Adolphus would be more wholesome company than my countesses and Wetters and such riff-raff.

I was unable to regard William Adolphus as an intellectual resource, and did not associate Victoria with the exercise of influence. The inefficiency of the princess' new move revealed the straits to which she felt herself reduced. The result of the position which I have described was almost open strife between her and me; Hammerfeldt's powerful bridle alone held her back from declared rupture. His method of facing the danger was very different. He sought to exercise no veto, but he kept watch; he knew where I went, but made no objections to my going; any liberal notions which I betrayed in conversation with him he received with courteous attention and affected to consider the result of my own meditations. Had my feelings been less deeply involved I think his method would have succeeded; even as it was, he checked and retarded what he could not stop. The cordiality of our personal relations remained unbroken, and so warm that he felt himself able to speak to me in a half serious, half jesting way about the Countess von Sempach.

"A most charming woman, indeed, sire," said he; "in fact, too charming a woman."

I understood him and began to defend myself.

"I'm not in love with the countess," I said; "but I give her my confidence, prince."

He shook his head, smiled, and took a pinch of snuff, glancing at me humorously.

"Reverse it," he suggested. "Be in love with her, but don't give her your confidence. You'll find it safer and also more pleasant that way."

My confidence might affect high matters; my love he regarded as a passing fever. He did not belong to an age of strict morality in private life, and his bent of mind was utterly opposed to

considering an intrigue with a woman of the countess' attractions as a serious crime in a young man of my position. "Hate her," was my mother's impossible exhortation. "Love her, but don't trust her," was the prince's subtle counsel. He passed at once from the subject, content with the seed that he had sown. There was much in him and in his teaching which one would defend to-day at some cost of reputation; but I never left him without a heightened and enhanced sense of my position and my obligations. If you will, he lowered the man to exalt the king; this was of a piece with all his wily compromises.

Victoria arrived, and her husband. William Adolphus' attitude was less apologetic than it had been before marriage; he had made Victoria mother to a fine baby and claimed the just credit. He was jovial, familiar, and, if I may so express myself, brotherly to the last degree. Fortunately, however, he interpreted his more assured position as enabling him to choose his own friends and his own pursuits; these were not mine, and in consequence I was little troubled with his company. As an ally to my mother he was a passive failure; his wife was worse than inactive. Victoria's conduct displayed the height of unwisdom. She denounced the countess to my face, and besought my mother to omit the Sempachs from her list of acquaintances. Fortunately the princess had been dissuaded from forcing on an open scandal; my sister had to be content with matching her mother's coldness by her rudeness when the countess came to court. Need I say that my attentions grew the more marked, and gossip even more rife?

Wetter's bill came up for discussion, and was hurled in vain against Hammerfeldt's solid phalanx of country gentlemen and wealthy *bourgeoisie*. I had kept a seal on my lips, and in common opinion was still the prince's docile disciple. Wetter accepted my attitude with easy friendliness, but he ventured to observe that if any case arose which enabled me to show that my hostility to his party was not inveterate, the proof would be a pleasure to him and his friends, and possibly of no disadvantage to me. Not the barest reference to the countess pointed his remark. I had not seen her or heard from her for nearly a week; on the after-

noon of the day after the bill was thrown out I decided to pay her a visit.

Wetter was to take luncheon at her house, and I allowed him to drop a hint of my coming. I felt that I had done my duty as regards the bill; I was very apprehensive of my reception by the countess. The opposition that encircled me inflamed my passion for her; the few days' separation had served to convince me that I could not live without her.

I found her alone; her face was a little flushed and her eyes bright. The moment the door was shut she turned on me almost fiercely.

"Why did you send to say you were coming?"

"I didn't send; I told Wetter. Besides, I always send before I go anywhere."

"Not always before you come to me," she retorted. "You're not to hide behind your throne, Cæsar. I was going out if you hadn't prevented me."

"The hindrance need not last a moment," said I, bowing.

She looked at me for a moment, then broke into a reluctant smile.

"You haven't sent to say you were coming for a week," she said.

"No, nor come, either."

"Yes, of course, that's it. Sit down; so will I. No, in your old place, over there. Max has been giving me a beautiful bracelet."

"That's very kind of Max."

She glanced at me with challenging witchery.

"And I've promised to wear it every day, never to be without it. Doesn't it look well?" She held up her arm, where the gold and jewels sparkled on the white skin as the sleeve of her gown fell back.

I paid to Max' bracelet and the arm which wore it the meed of looks, not of words.

"I've been afraid to come," I said.

"Is there anything to be afraid of here?" she asked, with a smile and a wave of her hands.

"Because of Wetter's bill."

"Oh, the bill! You were very cowardly, Cæsar."

"I could do nothing."

"You never can, it seems to me." She fixed on me eyes that she had made quite grave and invested with a critically discriminating regard. "But I'm very pleased to see you. Oh, and I forgot, of course

I'm very much honored, too. I'm always forgetting what you are."

On an impulse of chagrin at the style of her reception, or of curiosity, or of bitterness, I spoke the thought of my mind.

"You never forget it for a moment," I said. "I forget it, not you."

She covered a start of surprise by a hasty and pretty little yawn, but her eyes were inquisitive, almost apprehensive. After a moment she picked up her old weapon, the fire screen, and hid her face from the eyes downwards. But the eyes were set on me, and now, it seemed, in reproach.

"If you think that, I wonder you come at all," she murmured.

"I don't want you to forget it. But I'm something besides."

"Yes, a poor boy with a cruel mother—and a rude sister—and"—she sprang suddenly to her feet—"and," she went on, "a charming old adviser. Cæsar, I met Prince von Hammerfeldt yesterday. Shall I tell you what he said to me?"

"Yes."

"He bowed over my hand and kissed it and smiled, and twinkled with his old eyes, and then he said, 'Madam, I am growing vain of my influence over his majesty.'"

"The prince was complimenting you," I remarked, although I was not so dull as to miss either Hammerfeldt's mocking or her understanding of it.

"Complimenting me? Yes, I suppose he was, on not having done you any harm. Why? Because I could not."

"You wouldn't wish to, countess."

"No; but I might wish to be able to, Cæsar."

She stood there the embodiment of a power the greater because it feigned distrust of its own might.

"No, I don't mean that," she continued a moment later. "But I should—" She drew near to me, and, catching up a little chair, sat down on it, close to my elbow. "Ah, how I should like the prince to think I had a little power!" Then in a low, coaxing whisper she added, "You need only pretend—pretend a little just to please me, Cæsar."

"And what will you do just to please me, countess?" My whisper was low also, but full where hers had been delicate; rough, not gentle, urging rather than

imploring. I was no match for her in the science of which she was mistress, but I did not despair. She seemed nervous, as though she distrusted even her keen thrusts and ready parries. I was but a boy still, but sometimes nature betrays the secrets of experience. Suddenly she broke out in a new attack, or a new line of the general attack.

"Wouldn't you like to show a little independence?" she asked. "The prince would like you all the better for it." She looked in my face. "And people would think more of you. They say that Hammerfeldt is the real king now—or he and Princess Heinrich between them."

"I thought they said that you——"

"I? Do they? Perhaps! They know so little. If they knew anything, they couldn't say that!"

To be told they gossiped of her influence seemed to have no terror for her; her regret was that the talk should be all untrue and she in fact impotent. She stirred me to declare that power was hers, and I her servant. It seemed to me that to accept her leading was to secure perennial inspiration and a boundless reward. Was Hammerfeldt my schoolmaster? I was not blind to the share that vanity had in her mood, nor to ambition's part in it; but I saw also and exulted in her tenderness. All these impulses in her I was now ready to use, for I also had my vanity: a boy's vanity in a tribute wrung from a woman. And beyond this, passion was strong in me.

She went on in real or affected petulance.

"Can they point to anything I have done? Are any appointments made to please me? Are my friends ever favored? They are all out in the cold and likely to stay there, aren't they, Cæsar? Oh, you're very wise! You take what I give you; nobody need know of that. But you give nothing, because that would make talk and gossip. The prince has taught you well. Yes, you're very prudent." She paused and stood looking at me with a contemptuous smile on her lips; then she broke into a pitying little laugh. "Poor boy!" said she. "It's a shame to scold you. You can't help it."

It is easy enough now to say that all this was cunningly thought of and cunningly phrased. Yet it was not all cunning; or, rather, it was the primitive, un-

meditated cunning that nature gives to us, the instinctive weapon to which the woman flew in her need, a cunning of heart, not of brain. However inspired, however shaped, it did its work.

"What do you say?" said I; in my agitation I was brief and blunt.

"Ask? Must I ask? Well, I ask that you should show somehow, how you will, that you trust us, that we are not outcasts, riffraff, as Princess Heinrich calls us—lepers! Do it how you like; choose anybody you like from among us—I don't ask for any special person. Show that some one of us has your confidence. Why shouldn't you? The king should be above prejudice, and we are honest—some of us."

I tried to speak lightly and smiled at her.

"You are all I love in the world—some of you," I said.

She sat down again in the little chair, and turned her face upwards towards me.

"Then, do it, Cæsar," she said very softly.

It had been announced a few days before that our ambassador at Paris had asked to be relieved of his post; there was already talk about his successor. Remembering this, I said, more in jest than seriousness:

"The Paris embassy? Would that satisfy you?"

Her face became suddenly radiant, merry, and triumphant; she clapped her hands and then held them clasped towards me.

"You suggested it yourself," she cried.

"In joke."

"Joke? I won't be joked with. I choose that you should be serious. You said the Paris embassy. Are you afraid it'll make Hammerfeldt too angry? Fancy the princess and your sister! How I shall love to see them!" She dropped her voice as she added, "Do it for me, Cæsar."

"Who should have it?"

"I don't care. Anybody, so long as he's one of us. Choose somebody good, and then you can defy them all."

She saw the seriousness that had now fallen on me; what I had idly suggested and she caught up with so fervent a welcome, was no small thing. If I did it, it would be at the cost of Hammerfeldt's confidence, perhaps of his services; he might refuse to endure such an open re-

buff. And I knew in my heart that the specious justifications were unsound; I should not act because of them; they were the merest pretext. I should give what she asked to her. Should I not be giving her my honor also—that public honor which I had learned to hold so high?

"I can't promise today; you must let me think," I pleaded.

I was prepared for another outburst of petulance, for accusations of timidity, of indifference, again of willingness to take and unwillingness to give. But she sat still, looking at me intently, and presently laid her hand in mine.

"Yes, think," she said with a sigh.

I bent down and kissed the hand that lay in mine. Then she raised it and held her arm up before her.

"Max' bracelet!" she said, sighing again and smiling. Then she rose to her feet and, walking to the hearth, stood looking down into the fire. I did not join her, but sat in my chair; for a long while neither of us spoke. The room was very quiet. At last I rose to my feet. She heard the movement and turned her head.

"I will come again tomorrow," I said.

She stood still for a moment, regarding me intently. Then she walked quickly across to me, holding out her hands. As I took them she laughed nervously. I did not speak, but I looked into her eyes, and then, as I pressed her hands, I kissed her cheek. The nervous laugh came again, but she said nothing. I left her standing there and went out.

I walked home alone through the lighted streets. It has always been and is still my custom to walk about freely and unattended. This evening the friendly greetings of those who chanced to recognize me in the glare of the lamps were pleasant to me. I remember thinking that all these good folk would be grieved if they knew what was going on in the young king's mind; how he was torn hither and thither, his only joy a crime, and the guarding of his honor become a sacrifice that seemed too great for his strength. There was one kind faced fellow in particular, whom I noticed drinking a glass at a café. He took off his hat to me with a cheery, "God bless your majesty!" I should have liked to sit down by him and tell him all about it. He had been young, and he looked shrewd and

friendly. I had nobody whom I could tell about it. I don't remember ever seeing this man again, but I think of him still as of one who might have been a friend. By his dress he appeared to be a clerk or a shopkeeper.

I had an appointment for that evening with Hammerfeldt, but found a note in which he excused himself from coming. He had taken a chill and was confined to his bed. The business could wait, he said, and went on to remark that no time should be lost in considering the question of the Paris embassy; he added three or four names as possible selections; all those mentioned were well known and decided adherents of his own. I was reading his letter when my mother and Victoria came in. They had heard of the prince's indisposition, but on making inquiries were informed that it was not serious. I sent at once to inquire after him, and handed his note to the princess.

"Any of those would do very well," she said when she finished it. "They have all been trained under the prince, and are thoroughly acquainted with his views."

"And with mine?" I asked, smiling.

A look of surprise appeared on my mother's face; she looked at me doubtfully.

"The prince's views are yours, I suppose," she said.

"I am not sure I like any of his selections," I observed.

I do not think that my mother would have said anything more at the time; her judgment having been convinced, she would not allow temper to lead her into hostilities. Here, as so often, the unwise course was left to my dear Victoria, who embraced it with her usual readiness.

"Doesn't Wetter like any of them?" she asked ironically.

I remained silent. She came nearer and looked into my face, laughing maliciously.

"Or is it the countess? Haven't they made enough love to the countess, or too much, or what?"

"My dear Victoria," I said, "you must make allowances. The countess is the prettiest woman in Forstadt."

My sister courtesied with an ironical smile.

"I mean, of course," I added, "since William Adolphus carried you off to Gronenstahl."

My mother interrupted this little quarrel.

"I am sure you'll be guided by the prince's judgment," she observed.

Victoria was not to be quenched.

"And not by the beauty of the prettiest woman in Forstadt;" and she added: "The creature's as plebeian as she can be."

As a rule, I was ready enough to spar with my sister; tonight I had not the spirit; tonight, moreover, she, whom as a rule I could treat with good humored indifference, had power to wound. The least weighty of people speaking the truth cannot be wholly disregarded. I prepared to go to my room, remarking:

"Of course I shall discuss the matter with the prince."

Again Victoria rushed to the fray.

"You mean that it's not our business?" she asked, with a toss of her head.

I was goaded beyond endurance; and it was not their business. Princess Heinrich might find some excuse in her familiarity with public affairs; Victoria, at least, could urge no such plea.

"I am always glad of my mother's advice, Victoria," said I, and with a bow I left them. As I went out I heard Victoria cry, "It's all that hateful woman!"

Naturally the thing appeared to me then in a different light from that in which I can see it now. I cannot now think that my mother and sister were wrong to be anxious, disturbed, alarmed, even angry with the lady who occasioned them such discomfort. A young man under the influence of an older woman is no doubt a legitimate occasion for the fears and efforts of female relatives. I have recorded what they said not in protest against their feelings, but to show the singularly unfortunate manner in which they made what they, and especially Victoria, felt manifest; my object is not to blame what was probably inevitable in them, but to show how they overreached themselves and became not a drag on my infatuation as they hoped, but rather a spur that incited my passion to a quicker course.

That spur I did not need. She seemed to stand before me still as I had left her, with my kiss fresh on her cheeks, and on her lips that strange, nervous, helpless laugh—the laugh that admitted a folly she could not conquer, expressed a shame

that burned her even while she braved it, and owned a love so compact of this folly and this shame that its joy seemed all one with their bitterness. But to my younger heart and hotter man's blood the folly and shame were now beaten down by the joy; it freed itself from them and soared up into my heart on a liberated and triumphant wing. I had achieved this thing, I, the boy they laughed at and tried to rule. She herself had laughed at me. She laughed no more; when I kissed her she had not called me Cæsar; she had found no utterance save in that laugh; and the message of that laugh was surrender.

XI.

THE night brought me little rest and no wisdom. As though its own strength were not enough, my passion sought and found an ally in a defiant obstinacy which now made me desirous of doing what the countess asked for its own sake as well as for hers. Being diffident, I sought a mask in violence. I wanted to assert myself, to show the women that I was not to be driven and Hammerfeldt that I was not to be led. Neither their brusque insistence nor his suave and dexterous suggestions should control me or prevent me from exercising my own will. A distorted view of my position caused me to find its essence in the power of doing as I liked, and its dignity in disregarding wholesome advice because I objected to the manner in which it was tendered. This mood, ready and natural enough in youth, was an instrument of which my passion made effective use; I pictured the consternation of my advisers with hardly less pleasure than the delight of her whom I sought to serve. My sense of responsibility was dulled and deadened; I had rather do wrong than do nothing, cause harm than be the cause of nothing, that men should blame me rather than not canvass my actions or fail to attribute to me any initiative.

I felt somehow that the blame would lie with my counselors; they had undertaken to guide and control me; if they failed, they more than I must answer for the failure. Sophistry of this kind passes well enough with one who wants excuses, and may even array itself in a cloak of plausibility; it was strong in my mind by

virtue of the strong resentment from which it sprang and the strong ally to which its forces were joined. Passion and self assertion were at one; my conquest would be two fold; while the countess was brought to acknowledge my sway, those who had hitherto ruled my life would be reduced to a renunciation of their authority. The day seemed to me to promise at once emancipation and conquest; to mark the point at which I was to gain both liberty and empire, when I should become indeed a king; both in my own palace and in her heart a king.

In the morning I was occupied in routine business with one of the ministers. This gentleman gave me a tolerably good account of Hammerfeldt, although it appeared that the prince was suffering from a difficulty in breathing. There seemed, however, no cause for alarm, and when I had sent to make inquiries I did not deem it necessary to remain at home and await the return of my messenger. I paid my usual formal visit to my mother's apartments; the princess did not refer to our previous conversation, but her manner towards me was even unusually stiff and distant. I think that she had expected repentance; when I in my turn ignored the matter she became curt and disagreeable. I left her, more than ever determined on my course. I was glad to escape an interview with Victoria, and was now free to keep my appointment with Wetter. I had proposed to lunch with him, saying that I had one or two matters to discuss.

Even in my obstinacy and excitement I remained shrewd enough to see the advantage of being furnished with well sounding reason for the step that I was about to take. Wetter's forensic sharpness, ready wit, and persuasive eloquence would dress my case in better colors than I could contrive for myself; it mattered little to me how well he knew that arguments were needed not to convince myself, but to flourish in the faces of those who opposed and criticised me. It was also my intention to obtain from him the names of two or three of his friends who, apart from their views, were decently qualified to fulfil the duties of the post in the event of their nomination.

It was no shock, but rather a piquant titillation of my bitter humor, when I disentangled from Wetter's confident and

eloquent description of the ideal ambassador a tolerably accurate, if somewhat partial, portrait of himself. I was rather surprised at his desire for the position; subsequently I learned that pecuniary embarrassments made him willing to abandon, for a time, at least, the greater but more uncertain chances of active political warfare; however, given that he desired the embassy, it caused me no surprise that he should ask for it. To appoint him would be open war indeed; he was the prince's *bête noire*, my mother's pet aversion; that he was totally untrained in diplomacy was a minor but possibly serious objection; that he was extreme in his views seemed to me then no disqualification. I allowed him to perceive that I read his parable, but, remembering the case of the Greek generals and Themistocles, I ventured to ask him to give me another name.

"The only name that I could give your majesty with perfect confidence would be that of my good friend Max von Sempach," said he with an admirable air of honesty, but, as I thought, a covert gleam of amusement in his deep set eyes. I very nearly laughed. The only man fit for the embassy, except himself, was Count Max! And if Count Max went, of course the countess would go with him; equally of course the king must stay in Forstadt. I saw Wetter looking at me keenly out of the corner of his eye; it did not suit me that he should read my thoughts this time. I appeared to have no suspicion of the good faith of his suggestion and said with an air of dismay:

"Max von Sempach! Why, how is he suitable?"

With great gravity he gave me many reasons, proving not that Max was very suitable, but that everybody else was profoundly unsuitable, except the unmentioned candidate whose name was so well understood between us.

"These," I observed, "would seem to be reasons for looking elsewhere—I mean to the other side—for a suitable man."

He did not trouble to argue that with me. He knew that his was not the voice to which I should listen.

"If your majesty comes to that conclusion, my friends and I will be disappointed," he said, "but we must accept your decision."

There was much to like in Wetter.

Men are not insincere merely because they are ambitious, dishonest merely because they are given to intrigue, selfish merely because they ask things for themselves. There is a grossness of moral fiber, not in itself a good thing, but very different from rottenness. Wetter was a keen and convinced partisan and an ardent believer in himself; his cause ought to win, and, if his hand could take the helm, would win; this was his attitude, and it excused some want of scruple both in promoting the cause and in insuring to it his own effective support. But he was a big man, of a well developed nature, hearty, sympathetic, and free from cant, full of force, of wit, of unblunted emotion. He would not, however, have made at all a good ambassador; and he would not have wanted to be one had he not run into debt.

Max von Sempach, on the other hand, would fill the place respectably, although not brilliantly; Wetter knew this, and the fact gave to the mention of the count's name a decent appearance without depriving it of its harmlessness. He named a suitable but an impossible person—a person to me impossible.

Soon after the meal I left him, telling him that I should come in again later and had ordered my carriage to call for me at his house at five o'clock. Turning down the quiet lane that led to the countess', I soon reached my destination. I was now in less agitation than on the day before. My mind was made up; I came to give what she asked. Wetter should have his embassy. More than this: I came no longer in trepidation, no longer fearing her ridicule even while I sought her love, no more oppressed with the sense that in truth she might be laughing while she seemed to encourage. There was the dawning of triumph in my veins, an assurance of victory, and the fierce delight in a determination come to at great cost and to be held, it may be, at greater still. In all these feelings, mighty always, there were for me the freshness, the rush of youth, and the venturous joy of new experience.

On her also a crisis of feeling had come; she was not her old self, nor I to her what I had been. There was a strained, almost frightened look in her eyes; a low voiced "Augustin" replaced her bantering "Cæsar." Save for my name

she did not speak as I led her to a couch and sat down by her side. She looked slight, girlish, and pathetic in a simple gown of black; timidity renewed her youth. Well might I forget that she was not a maiden of meet age for me, and she herself for an instant cheat time's reckoning. She made of me a man, of herself a girl, and prayed love's advocacy to prove the delusion true.

"I have been with Wetter," said I. "He wants the embassy."

I fancy that she knew his desire; her hand pressed mine, but she did not speak.

"But he recommended Max," I went on.

"Max!" For a moment her face was full of terror as she turned to me; then she broke into a smile. Wetter's device was plain to her also.

"You see how much he wants it for himself," said I. "He knows I would sooner send a gutter boy than Max. And you know it."

"Do I?" she murmured.

I rose and stood before her.

"It is yours to give, not mine," said I. "Do you give it to Wetter?"

As she looked up at me, her eyes filled with tears, while her lips curved in a timid smile.

"What—what trouble you'll get into!" she said.

"It's not a thousandth part of what I would do for you. Wetter shall have it, then—or Max?"

"Not Max," she said; her eyes told me why it should not be Max.

"Then, Wetter," and I fell on one knee by her, whispering, "The king gives it to his queen."

"They'll blame you so; they'll say all sorts of things."

"I shan't hear them; I shall hear only you."

"They'll be unkind to you."

"They can't hurt me, if you're kind to me."

"Perhaps they'll say I—I got it from you."

"I am not ashamed. What is it to me what they say?"

"You don't care?"

"For nothing in the world but you and to be with you."

She sat looking up at me for an instant; then she threw her arm over the end of the sofa, and laid her face on the cushion;

I heard her sob softly. Her other hand lay in her lap; I took it and raised it to my lips. I did not know the meaning of her tears. I was happy and triumphant. She sobbed, not loudly or violently, but with a pitiful gentleness.

"Why do you cry, darling?" I whispered.

She turned her face to me; the tears were running down her cheeks. "Why do I cry?" she moaned softly. "Because I'm wicked—I suppose I'm wicked—and so foolish. And—and you are good and noble, and—and you'll be great. And——" The sobs choked her voice and she turned her face half away. "And I'm old, Augustin."

I could not enter into her mood; joy pervaded me; but neither did I scorn her nor grow impatient. I perceived dimly that she struggled with a conflict of emotions beyond my understanding. Words were unsafe, likely to be wrong, to make worse what they sought to cure. I caressed her, but trusted my tongue no further than to murmur endearments. She grew calmer, sat up, and dried her eyes.

"But it's so absurd," she protested. "Augustin, lots of boys are just as absurd as you; but was any woman ever as absurd as I am?"

"Why do you call it absurd?"

"Oh, because, because"—she moved near me suddenly—"because, although I've tried so hard, I can't feel it the least absurd. I do love you."

Here was her prepossession all the while—that the thing would seem absurd, not that there was sin in it. I can see now why her mind fixed on this point; she was, in truth, speaking not to me who was there by her, me as I was, but to the man who should be; she pleaded not only with herself, but with my future self, praying the mature man to think of her with tenderness and not with a laugh, interceding with what should one day be my memory of her. Ah, my dear, that prayer of yours is answered. I do not laugh as I write. At you I could never have laughed; and if I set out to force a laugh even at myself, I fall to thinking of what you were, and again I do not laugh. Then, what is it that the world outside must have laughed at with a very self-conscious wisdom? Its laughter was nothing to us then, and today is to me as

nothing. Is it always ready to weep at a farce and laugh at a tragedy?

"But you've nobody else," she went on softly. "I shouldn't have dared if you'd had anybody else. Long ago—do you remember?—you had nobody, and you liked me to kiss you. I believe I began to love you then; I mean I began to think how much some woman would love you some day. But I didn't think I should be the woman! Oh, don't look at me so hard, or—or you'll see——"

"How much you love me?"

"No, no. You'll see my wrinkles. See, if I do this, you can't look at my face." And putting her arms round my neck, she hid her face.

I was strangely tongue tied, or perhaps not strangely; for there comes a time when the eyes say all that there is desire or need to say. Her pleadings were in answer to my eyes.

"Oh, I know you think so now," she murmured. "But you won't go on thinking so—and I shall." She raised her head and looked at me; now a smile of triumph came on her face. "Oh, but you do think so now," she whispered in a voice still lower, but full of delight. "You do think so now," and again she hid her face from me. But now I knew that the triumph had entered into her soul also and that the shadows could no longer altogether dim its sunshine for her.

The afternoon became full and waned to dusk as we sat together. We said little; there were no arrangements made; we seemed in a way cut off from the world outside and from the consideration of it. The life which we must each lead, lives in the main apart from each other, had receded into distance and went unnoticed; we had nothing to do save to be together; when we were together there was little that we cared to say, no protestations that we had need to make. There was between us so absolute a sympathy, so full an agreement in all that we gave, all that we accepted, all that we abandoned. Doubts and struggles were as though they had never been. There is a temptation to think sometimes that things so perfect justify themselves, that conscience is not discredited by violence, but signs a willing abdication, herself

convinced. For passion can simulate right even as in some natures the love of right becomes a turbulent passion, in the end, like most of such, destructive of itself.

"Then, I am yours, and you are mine. And the embassy is Wetter's?"

"The embassy is whose you like," she cried, "if the rest is true."

"It is Wetter's. Do you know why? That everybody may know how I am yours."

She did not refuse even the perilous fame I offered.

"I should be proud of it," she said, with head erect.

"No, no; nobody shall breathe a letter of your name," I exclaimed in a sudden turn of feeling. "I will swear that you had nothing to do with it, that you hate him, that you never mentioned it."

"Say what you like," she whispered.

"If I did that, I should say to all Forstadt that there's no woman in the world like you."

"You needn't say it to all Forstadt. You haven't even said it to me yet."

We had been sitting together. Again I fell on one knee, prepared to offer her formal homage in a sweet extravagance. On a sudden she raised her hand, her face grew alarmed.

"Hark!" she said. "Hark!"

"To your voice, yours only!"

"No—there is a noise. Somebody is coming. Who can it be?"

"I don't care who it is."

"Why, dearest! But you must care. Get up, get up, get up!"

I rose slowly to my feet. I was indeed in a mood when I did not care. The steps were close outside. Before they could come nearer, I kissed her again.

"Who can it be? I am denied to everybody," she said, bewildered.

There was a knock at the door.

"It is not Max," she said with a swift glance at me. I stood where I was. "Come in," she cried.

The door opened, and to my amazement Wetter stood there. He was panting, as though he had run fast, and his air displayed agitation. The countess ran to him instantly. His coming seemed to revive the fears that her love had laid to rest.

(To be continued.)

THE FILIPINOS.

BY EDWIN WILDMAN, UNITED STATES VICE CONSUL AT HONGKONG.

THE EIGHT MILLION ORIENTALS WHO HAVE COME UNDER THE AMERICAN FLAG—WHAT THEY ARE TODAY,
AND WHAT EDUCATION AND GOOD GOVERNMENT MAY HELP THEM TO BECOME.

THE native Filipinos are a picturesque, intelligent, and curiously interesting race; particularly so to the American, who is already trying to analyze their character and lay down a set of rules by which to gage them. Perhaps he will succeed; if so, he will show himself a better student of humanity than the Spaniard, who has been vainly trying to take the Filipino's measure for three centuries. I will endeavor to present some of the salient traits of this enigmatical race; but as to deducing conclusions, I should prefer to leave the task to those who, for the present at least, must bear the heavy responsibility of governing it.

The Filipino men are sturdy little fellows; the women are graceful and not without good looks. They have never known the dwarfing influences of the class distinctions, and the mixture of idolatry and skepticism, that are the heritage of the Chinese and Japanese, their neighbors. They know neither the mandarin nor the coolie class; in a sense all Filipinos are equal.

China and Japan have made unsuccessful efforts to bring the islands under their control, but nature seems to have intended that their identity should remain distinct. She hedged them about with rains and heat, typhoons and earthquakes, that have effectually protected them from invaders. Fleets of Chinese war junks, thirsting for the wealth of the Philippines, have had their greed checked by the death dealing storms of the China Sea.

The Chinaman of the present century, profiting by the fate of his ancestors, finally relinquished the perilous undertaking of capturing and looting the Philippines; and he has gone there at the invitation of the crafty Spaniard, who sought his skill and industry at wages on which only a Chinaman can exist. The invitation was extended to John alone. His

wives and daughters were not included. John must marry, if at all, a native woman, and especial advantages and inducements were offered if he took to himself a Filipino wife. The result has been that the mestizo, or halfbreed, is found everywhere in Manila and throughout the provinces. The mestizo is a good citizen. He is thrifty, inheriting his father's industry and commercial ability, and the gentle and self possessed disposition of his mother. Of the mestizo type there are some attractive women; and many Spaniards have taken native or halfbreed wives. The descendants of these unions form a large percentage of the business population. In Manila this class usually call themselves Spaniards, but the Tagalo and Chinese cast of countenance is easily recognized.

The Philippine Malay is invariably short of stature, but is well formed, round of limb, having a good chest expansion and a well shaped head. His looks are boyish and he never seems to grow old, nor does his hair appear to lose its deep black and ebony polish with advancing years.

The native woman always wears her hair loose, flowing at the pleasure of the breeze on her bare shoulders. She dresses it frequently with a shell comb, which, when not in use, is the sole hair ornament, clinging to the back of her head. Coconut oil is used liberally to give her tresses luster and aid their growth, and no self respecting woman, native or Spaniard, ever wears a hat. In this respect Manila is a paradise for theater goers; but unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately—only one company of American players has as yet favored a Philippine audience.

The Filipinos are cleanly. Bathing is a national sport with them, and one which in interest for the observer outclasses golf and polo. In the Rio Grande, up the swift flowing Pasig, and on the beach in