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Yours truly, THOMAS PETERS, WINSLOW, MAINE.

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THE AMERICAN BARON.

(BY JAMES DE MILLE.) (Continued.) CHAPTER XXI. AN EVENTFUL JOURNEY.

On the day following, two carriage rolled out of Rome, and took the road toward Florence by the way of Civita Castellana.

It was early morning, and over the wide Campagna there hung mists, which were dissipated gradually as the sun arose.

For mile after mile they drove on; and the drive soon proved very monotonous. It was nothing but one long and unvarying plain, with this only change, that every mile brought them nearer to the mountains.

Formerly Mrs. Willoughby alone had been the confidante of Minnie's secret, but the events of the past few days had disclosed most of her troubles to the other ladies also, at least as far as the general outlines were concerned.

The consequence was that they were travelling in this way and Minnie knew that they all knew it. Yet this unpleasant consciousness did not in the least interfere with the sweetness of her temper and the gentleness of her manner.

As for the patient endurance of her unmerited wrongs, she blamed no one; she made no complaint; yet there was in her attitude something so touching, so clinging, so pathetic, so forlorn, and in her face something so sweet, so sad, so reproachful, and so pitious, that she enforced sympathy; and each one began to have a half-guilty fear that Minnie had been wronged by her. Especially did Mrs. Willoughby feel this.

At length there came over that sunny soil the first cloud. The solitary horseman who had been riding behind, had overtaken the different carriages.

The first carriage contained Lord Hawbury and Sone Dacres. The horseman passed, he recognized them with a careless nod and smile.

Do you see that man, parson? said the Baron to his companion. Do you recognize him? No.

Well you saw him at Minnie's house. He came in. No, he didn't.

gained a fourth idea, compounded of these three, which again blended with another and an original one of her own, gained from a personal observation of the Baron, whose appearance on the stairs and impatient summons for "Min" were very vividly impressed on her memory.

That was indeed, a memorable day, and was now alluded to by them as the day of the siege. It was not without difficulty that they had withstood Minnie's earnest protestations, and intrenched themselves. But Mrs. Willoughby was obdurate and Minnie's tears, which flowed freely, were unavailing.

Then there came the first knock of the impatient and aggressive visitor, followed by others in swift succession, and in ever increasing power.

After a very eventful day night came. They heard footsteps pacing up and down, and knew that it was their tormentor, Minnie's heart again melted with tender pity for the man whose love for her had turned his head, and she begged to be allowed to speak to him.

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But even this great victory did not reassure the ladies. Dreading another visit they hurried away to a hotel, leaving the maids to follow with the luggage as soon as possible.

Events so very exciting as these had produced a very natural effect upon the mind of Ethel. They had thrown her thoughts out of their old groove, and fixed them in a new one.

As for Mrs. Willoughby, in spite of her self reproach about her purely imaginary neglect of Minnie, she felt such an extraordinary relief that it affected all her nature.

The ladies now disrobed themselves, and their maids assisted them to perform the duties of a very simple toilet.

There were two carriages, and at length reached Civita Castellana. Here they drove up to the hotel, and the ladies got out and went up to their apartments.

Upon these Mrs. Willoughby looked for some time, when at length her ears were arrested by the roll of wheels down the street.

She rushed away from the windows. Lady Dalrymple and Ethel were in this room, and Minnie in the one beyond.

Oh! she cried. What is it? He's there! Who? who? they cried, in alarm. That horrid man!

Did you see him? he cried. The Italian! I thought so! What do you say now? Wasn't I right?

By Jove! cried Lord Hawbury. Whereupon Dacres relapsed into silence sitting upright glaring after the horseman, cherishing in his gloomy soul the darkest and most vengeful thoughts.

And with these words the Baron sat glaring after Italian with something in his eye that resembled faintly the fierce glance of Sone Dacres.

The Italian rode on. A few miles further were the two carriages. Minnie and her sister were sitting on the front seats and saw a stranger as he advanced.

Her surprise was so great that she uttered an exclamation of terror, which startled the other ladies, and made them all look in that direction.

How very odd! said Ethel, thoughtfully. And now I suppose you'll all go and say that I brought him too, said Minnie.

I had not been aware, he said, politely in his broken English, that your lady sippa's bin intend to travella. Ees eet not subito intention?

Why, Kitty darling? asked Minnie. I don't know how it is, but I actually trembled when that man came up, and I haven't got over it yet.

Thank you, much, but I do not need it, said Mrs. Willoughby. I suppose it will pass off.

Really, Minnie darling, I have nothing against the Count, only once he was a little too intrusive; but he seems to have got over that, and if he'll be nice and quiet and proper, I'm sure I've nothing to say against him.

Well, really, I don't see much in the Count to make one tremble. I suppose poor, dear Kitty has been so agitated lately, and it's her poor nerves.

Well, ma'am—about the business I came for. You have made a sudden decision to make this journey. I want to know, ma'am, if you made any enquiries about this road before starting?

Well, ma'am—the country is in a disorderly state, and near the boundary line it swarms with brigands.

And why? Yes, particularly for ladies. And why? Why, ma'am, the country is in a disorderly state, and near the boundary line it swarms with brigands.

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You need not feel at all nervous, my dear, said she, gravely. I do not think that this person can give us any trouble.

These words brought comfort to Ethel and Mrs. Willoughby. They at once perceived their truth. To force himself into their presence in a public hotel, was, of course, impossible, even for one so reckless as he seemed to be; and on the road he could not trouble them in any way, since he would have to drive before them or behind them.

Not only after the arrival of the Baron and his friends another carriage drove up. None of the ladies were at the window, and so they did not see the wince of nonchalance of Hawbury as he lounged into the house, or the stern face of Sone Dacres as he strode before him.

During dinner the ladies conversed freely about that horrid man, wondering what plan he would adopt to try to effect an entrance among them.

All started. One of the maids went to the door, and found a servant there who brought a message from the Baron Ataramonte. He wished to speak to the ladies on business of the most urgent importance.

He's beginning to be more and more violent said Lady Dalrymple. Well, dear, she added, resignedly, in my opinion it will be better to see him, and have done with him. If we do not, I'm afraid he will pester us further.

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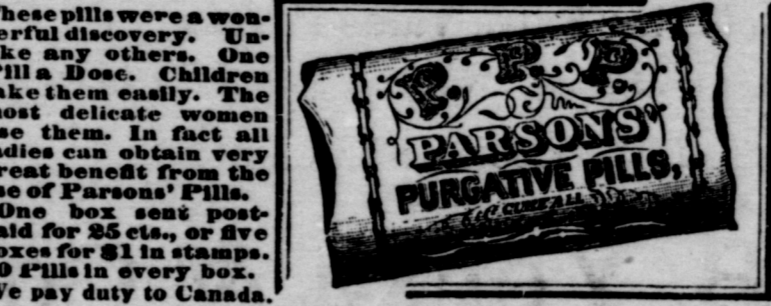
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CHAPTER XXII. ADVICE RECEIVED. During dinner the ladies conversed freely about that horrid man, wondering what plan he would adopt to try to effect an entrance among them.

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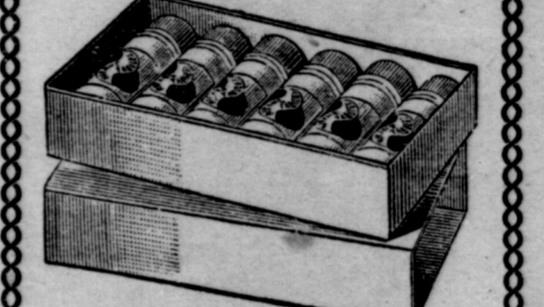
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