

"WAR"

A SERIAL STORY BY
BARONESS BERTHA VON SUTTNER

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Continued from page 5 of last issue

"There would then be fewer parades and reviews, fewer men to slay as food for bullets. That would hardly be a misfortune."

Much provoked, my father said: "Oh you women! Luckily the young do not ask your permission, when soldier's blood flows in their veins. But Rudolf will not remain your only son, you will marry again. By the way, what has become of all your admirers? There is Captain Oleksky seriously in love with you. Just lately he poured it all out to me, and I should like him as a son-in-law."

"I do not care for him for a husband."

"How about Major Millersdorf?"

"You may call the whole army roll, but I want none of them." And turned the subject: "When is the dinner?"

"At five. Come down earlier. Adieu, I must go. Kiss Rudolf for me—the future Field-Marshal of the Imperial Army."

Could the dinner be a "stiff, tiresome affair," when the presence of Baron Tilling moved me in such a singular way? We had no occasion to speak at the table, being separated, and even after the dinner, while serving the coffee in the drawing room, the two old generals remained my faithful attendants. I longed to speak to Tilling again about the battle-scene, and hear his sympathetic voice. But the circle left no opportunity for me to talk with him. The conversation ran on the usual topic.

"It will soon break out again," suggested one old general.

"Hum," said the other, "next time it will be with Russia."

"Must there always be a next time," I interrupted, but no one took notice.

"Italy first," persisted my father. "We must get back Lombardy. We should march into Milan as we did with Father Radetzky in '49. I remember, it was a bright sunny morn—"

"Oh!" I exclaimed in a panic, "we all know the story of the entry into Milan."

"And the story of the brave Hupfaut, also?" asked my father.

"Yes, and it is most revolting."

One of the group broke in diplomatically: "Let us hear it, Althaus. My father needed no encouragement."

"Hupfaut was a Tyrolean Jager, and the best shot imaginable. He proposed to take four comrades to the roof of the cathedral and shoot down the rebels. The four did nothing but load, and he shot, hitting the mark every time and killing ninety Italians."

"Horrible!" I exclaimed. "Each one shot had a mother or sweetheart at home, and had a right to his young life."

"My dear, they were all enemies, and that alters the point of view."

"Ah, true," said Dr. Bresser, "the whole world is turned upside down so long as there is racial enmity, and the laws of humanity will receive but slight recognition."

"What do you say, Baron Tilling?" I asked.

"I would have decorated the gallant breast of the man, from the point of view of war ethics, and then put a bullet into his stony heart. He deserved both."

"I gave the speaker a grateful look, and, except the doctor, all the guests seemed unpleasantly affected, and a short pause ensued in the talk."

The doctor then turned to my father, asking, "Have you read the new work by the English naturalist, Darwin?"

"I know nothing of it."

"Why, papa," I exclaimed, "that is the book you told me would soon be forgotten by the world."

"And, so far as I am concerned, it is forgotten."

"But," continued the doctor, "it has quite turned the world upside down with its new theory of the origin of species."

"You mean the ape theory?" asked the general at the right. "The idea that we are descended from the orang-outang?"

"Upon the whole," the cabinet minister began, nodding (and when he began thus we all trembled, for he was getting ready for a long discourse) "the thing seems absurd, but we dare not take it as a joke. The theory is powerfully built up on collected facts, and ingeniously worked out. Like all such rash conceptions it will find its followers and produce a certain effect on modern thought. It is a great pity it has been given so much consideration. Of course, the clergy will array itself against the degrading theory that man is descended from the apes, rather than

from God's image. No wonder they are shocked and denounce it. But church condemnation cannot prevent the spread of ideas that come from the heart of science. Until men of science themselves reduce it to an absurdity."

"What folly!" broke in my father, fearing that his guests might be bored. "One needs only a bit of common-sense to reject the absurd notion that man has descended from apes."

"Darwin has certainly awakened reasonable doubts, and apes and man do greatly resemble each other," the minister added, "but it will take some time to bring about a unity of opinion among the scientists about it."

"These gentry live by disputing," said the old general to the left, in a heavy Viennese dialect. "I too have heard something about this ape business. But why bother one's head with the chatter of the star-gazers and grass-collectors and frog-dissectors? I saw a picture of this Darwin, and I could well believe that his grandfather was a chimpanzee."

The entire company enjoyed the joke.

Then the quieter general spoke: "Can you imagine an ape inventing the telegraph? Speech alone raised men so far above beasts—"

"Pardon, your Excellency," interrupted Dr. Bresser, "but the art of speech and the capacity for invention were not among man's original powers. After all, it is the result of evolution and development."

"Yes, I know, Doctor," replied the general, "the war-cry of the new school is evolution, but one cannot develop a camel from a kangaroo, nor do we find apes to-day developing into men."

I turned to Baron Tilling: "And what do you think of Darwin? Are you a follower or an opponent?"

"Although I have heard much of late about Darwin, Countess, I cannot give an opinion, for I have not read the book."

"Nor have I," the doctor acknowledged.

"Nor I—nor I—nor I" came the chorus from the rest.

And the cabinet minister gravely wound up: "The subject is so popular to-day that the expressions, 'evolution,' 'natural selection,' 'survival of the fittest,' have passed into current thought. You find many defenders among those who thirst for new ideas and change, while cool-headed, critical people who insist on proof are found on the other side."

"There is always opposition to every new idea as soon as it comes up," said Tilling; "but one must have penetrated into the idea in order to be able to judge. Conservatives as a rule anything, and often for the worst and most absurd reasons, and the masses only repeat what they hear. To judge of scientific theories without investigation is absurd. Even Copernicus was thundered down by Rome—"

"But, as I said before," interrupted the minister, "not orthodox but science itself cries down false hypotheses in our day."

"New ideas are always objected to in the beginning by the old fogies who never like to give up their settled dogmas and views," Tilling replied. "For my part, I shall read the book and the opposition of the narrow-brained speaks rather for than against its truth."

"Oh, you brave, clear-thinking spirit!" I silently apostrophised the speaker.

CHAPTER III.

The dinner-party broke up at eight o'clock although my father insisted on detaining them. I politely urged a cup of tea, but each had an excuse and felt obliged to go. Tilling and Bresser had also risen to take leave, but were easily persuaded to stay. Father and the doctor were soon seated at the card-table, while Baron Tilling joined me by the fire.

"I have a scolding for you, Baron. After the first visit you forgot the way to my house."

"You never asked me."

"I told you, Saturdays."

"Pardon me, Countess, if I find regular reception days abominable. To meet a lot of strange people, bow to the hostess, sit a minute, hear the weather discussed, meet a stray acquaintance, venture a stupid remark; a desperate attempt to start a conversation with the hostess is interrupted by a new arrival, who starts the weather talk again, and then a fresh bunch comes in—perhaps a mother with four marriageable daughters—you give up your chair, and finally in weariness take leave and go. No, Countess, my talent for society is weak at best."

"I meet you nowhere. Perhaps you hate people, and are a bit misanthropic. No, I do not believe that, for I conclude from your words that you love all men."

"Hardly that; it is humanity as a whole I love, but not every man, not the coarse, worthless, self-seeking. I pity them because their education and circumstances made them unworthy of love."

"Education and circumstances? Does not the character depend on heredity?"

"Our circumstances are also a matter of inheritance."

"You do not hold a man responsible for his badness, and therefore not to be hated?"

"One does not always depend on the other. A man is often to be condemned, though he is not responsible. You are also not responsible for your beauty, and yet one may admire."

"Baron Tilling," I said reproachfully, "we began talking seriously and suddenly you treat me like a compliment-seeking society-miss."

"Pardon me; I only intended to use the illustration closest at hand."

An awkward pause followed. Then I said abruptly:—

"Why did you become a soldier, Baron Tilling?"

"Your question shows that you have looked into my mind. It was not I, Frederick Tilling, thirty-nine years old, who has seen three campaigns, who chose the profession. It was the ten-year-old little Fritz, who spent his babyhood playing with lead soldiers and toy war-horses. It was this boy, whose father, a decorated general, and whose lieutenant uncle were always asking, 'What are you going to be, my boy?' And the boy would always answer, 'A real soldier with a real sword and a live horse!'"

"You had a box of leaden soldiers given him to-day, but he shall never have them. Tell me, why did you not leave the army after the little Fritz had grown into the big Frederick? Had not the army become hateful to you?"

"To call it hateful is saying too much. The condition of affairs which requires that men shall enter the cruel duties of war, that I hate. But if such conditions are inevitable, I cannot hate the men who fulfil these duties conscientiously. If I left the service, would it diminish war? Another would hazard his life in my place. Why not I?"

"Is there not some better way for you to serve your fellows?"

"Perhaps. But I have been taught nothing thoroughly except the arts of war. I think a man can do good and be useful in almost any surrounding, and find opportunity to lift the burden of those dependent upon him. I appreciate the respect the world holds me in because of my position. My career has been quite fortunate, my comrades love me, and I enjoy my success. I have no estate, and as a civilian I could not help even myself. So why should I consider abandoning the military service?"

"Because killing people is repulsive to you."

"Yes, but in self-defence the responsibility for killing ceases. War is often called murder on a big scale, but the soldier never feels himself a murderer. Naturally the attitudes of the battle-field are revolting to me, and fill me with pain and disgust even as a seaman might suffer during a storm. Still a brave sailor is undaunted and ventures the sea again."

"Yes, if he must. But must there be war?"

"That is another question. The individual should do his duty, and that gives him strength and even pleasure."

"And so we chatted in a low tone, that we might not disturb the card-players. Neither would our conversation have suited the others, for Tilling told of the horrors he experienced in war, and I told him of my reading of Buckle, who argued that the war spirit would die out as civilization advanced. I felt Tilling's confidence as he displayed his inner feelings to me, and a certain current of sympathy was established between us."

"What are you two plotting and whispering about?" my father suddenly called out.

"I am telling the Countess old war stories."

"Oh, she likes that; she has heard them from her childhood."

We resumed our whispered talk. Suddenly Tilling fastened his gaze on me while speaking in a sympathetic voice. I thought of the princess, felt a sudden stab, and turned my head away.

"Why did your face change, Countess? Did my words offend you?"

I assured him it was nothing, but the conversation became rather strained. At last I rose and looked at the clock, and bade my father good-night. Tilling offered to take me downstairs.

"I fear I have offended you, Countess," he said, little in my carriage.

"On my word."

He put my hand to his lips.

"Why may I call?"

"On Saturday."

"That means not at all." He bowed and stepped back.

I wanted to speak again, but the carriage door was shut. I should have liked to cry tears of spite like a vexed child, to think I had been so cold to one whose warm sympathy I had so enjoyed. Oh, that hateful princess! Was it jealousy? Then it dawned on me with a burst of astonishment—I was in love with Tilling! "In love, love, love," answered the carriage wheels. "You are in love," the street lamps flashed at me. "You love him," breathed the scent of my glove, as I pressed the spot he kissed to my lips.

Next day in the red book I denied it all. I enjoyed a comparatively quiet

man, but that is far from falling in love. I would meet him the next time quite calmly, and find pleasure in conversing with him. How could I have been so disturbed yesterday? To-day I could laugh at my silliness."

The same day I called on my childhood friend, Lori Griesbach, from whose letter I read the news of my husband's death. Through our children we had much in common, and saw each other almost daily, and, in spite of many differences in our nature, we were real friends. Our two boys were the same age, and her little daughter Beatrix, ten months old, we had playfully destined should be some day the Countess Rudolf Dotzky. The conversation ran on dress, our children and acquaintances, the latest English novel, and the like.

As we chatted, I ventured to ask if she knew what the gossip had said about Tilling and the princess.

"Everybody knows there is nothing to it. Why, have you any interest in Tilling? Dear Martha, you are blushing. How happy I would be to see you in love once more. But Tilling is no match for you. He has nothing, and is too old. Ah, shall we ever forget that sad hour when you read my letter? War is a cruel business for some, and others find it excellent. My husband wishes for nothing more ardently than that he may distinguish himself."

"Or be crippled or shot dead."

"Oh, that only happens when it is one's destiny. Your destiny, my dear, was to be a young widow."

"And the war with Italy had to be to bring it about," I added.

"And I hope it may be my destiny to be the wife of a brilliant young general," said Lori, laughing.

"So another war must break out that your husband may be quickly promoted, as though that were the simple and only purpose of the government of the world."

The conversation changed to pure gossip, of Cousin Conrad Althaus and his devotion to Lilli; of the latest marriage; the last new English novel, "Jane Eyre"; of the misdeeds of Lori's French nurse; of the trouble of changing servants, and all the usual chatter of idle ladies.

"Now, my dear," I broke in, "I must really go, for I have other calls which I cannot put off." At another time I could have been entertained for hours with the little-tattle. But to-day my mind was elsewhere. Once more in my carriage, I realized that again there was a change in me, for even the wheels took up the refrain: Ah, Tilling, Frederick Tilling!

When should I see him again? was my one thought, for in vain I went nightly to the theatre, and from there to parties with the one hope. My reception day failed to bring him. Had I offended him? What would I do? I was all on fire to see him again. Oh, for another hour's talk with him! How I would make amends for my rudeness! The delight of such a conversation would be increased a hundredfold, for I was now willing to confess what was becoming more than plain to me, that I loved him.

The following Saturday brought Tilling's cousin for a call, and her appearance made my heart beat. Would she tell me of him who so constantly filled my thought? I could not ask her directly. To speak his name would betray me, for I even flushed at the thought. We talked of indifferent things, even the weather, and the one name that lay most at my heart I could not mention.

At last, without warning, she said, "Oh, Martha, I have a message for you. My cousin Frederick went away day before yesterday, and begs to be remembered to you."

The blood left my face, and I gasped: "Went away? Where? Is his regiment moved?"

"No; he has hurried to Berlin to his mother's deathbed. He adores her, poor fellow, and I pity him."

Two days afterwards I received a letter from Berlin in an unknown hand. Without reading it I knew it was from him:—

Berlin, Wilhelm St., 8, March 30, 1863. Midnight.

My Dear Countess—I must tell my sorrow to some one, yet ask myself why do I turn to you? I have no right to do so, but do so by irresistible impulse. You will feel with me, I am sure of that.

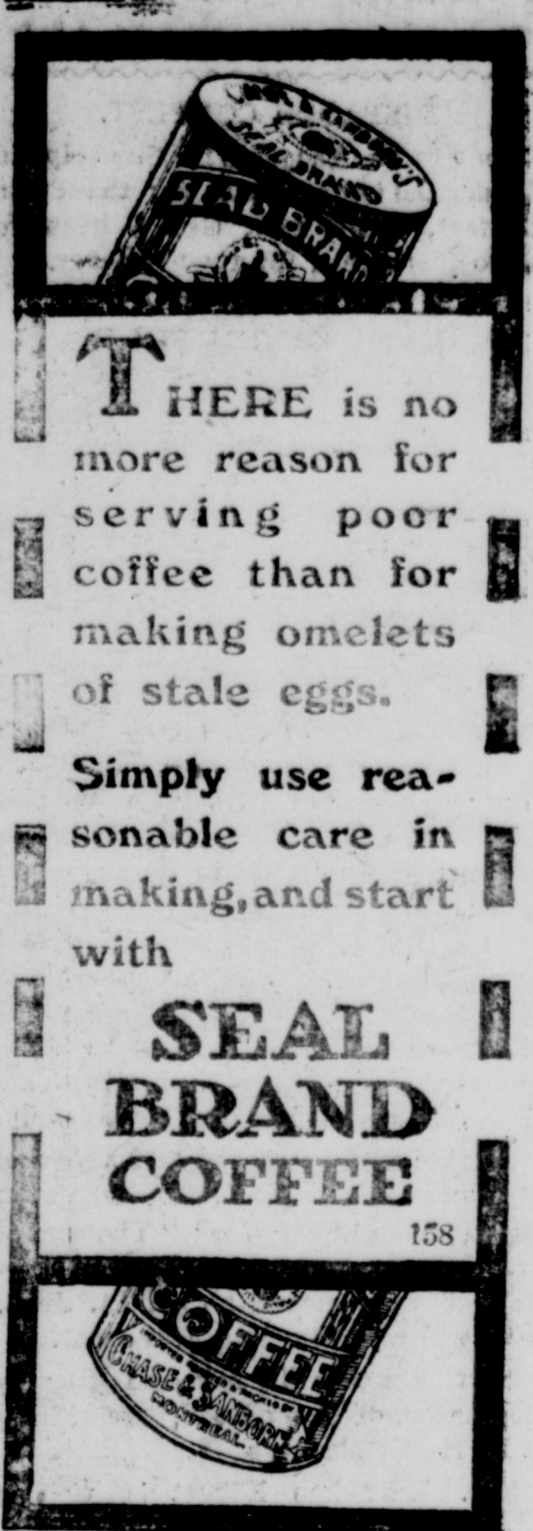
Had you known my mother, how you would have loved her! And now this tender heart, this fine mind, and charming disposition, must we put it into the grave—for there is no ray of hope. Day and night I am at her bed—and this is her last night. Such suffering, though now she is quiet, poor darling mother. Her senses are numb and her heartbeat is almost finished. Her sister and the physician are here with me.

How terrible is death and separation! It comes, but how we resist it when it would snatch a loved one away. What my mother means to me I can never tell you. She knows she is dying.

This morning she received me with an exclamation of joy when I arrived: "Is it you? Do I see once more my own Fritz? I feared you would be late."

"You will get well again, mother," I cried.

"No, no, there is no hope for that."



son. Let us not waste our words in meaningless words. Let our good-bye visit. I felt at the sobbing. "You are crying, son, I will not tell you to stop, for it should grieve you to part with your best friend, and I am sure I shall never be forgotten by you. Remember, also, that you have made my life very happy. Except your small childish sickness, or the dread that I might lose you during the time of war, you have given me nothing but the keenest happiness; you have shared all my burdens with me, and for this I bless you, my darling son."

Another attack came on, and her groans of pain almost crushed my heart. Oh, this last frightful enemy, death! I remembered the sights of agonized sufferers on the battle-field and in hospitals! When I reflect that we soldiers sometimes joyously drive others on to death, that we urge full-blooded eager young men on to sacrifice themselves willingly to this terrible enemy, against whom even the weak and broken-down old people fight so bitterly—is it not revolting?

This night is frightfully long. If only sleep might quiet her. But there she lies, with her lids parted, suffering. Every half-hour I bend over her motionless, then I come away to write a few more lines to you, and then I go to her again. It strikes four, and one shivers at the unfeeling strides of time as it relentlessly presses on to eternity, and at this very moment for this one passionately loved mother time must cease—for all eternity. But as the cold, outer world turns dull to our pain, so much the more longingly do we seek to fly to another human heart which we trust and hope may feel some union of feeling. And so this white sheet attracted me, and therefore I wrote this letter to you. Seven o'clock in the morning. It is over. Her last words were, "Farewell, my dear boy." Then she closed her eyes and slept. Sleep soundly, darling mother. In grief I kiss your dear hands.—Yours in deepest sorrow.

FREDERICK TILLING

I have this letter still. Prayed and faded the pages are now. For twenty-five years it has withstood my kisses and tears. It was sent "in deepest sorrow"; I received it "shouting with joy," for though there was not a single word of love in it, yet where was a plainer proof that the writer loved me than that he should turn to me at his mother's deathbed, to pour out his grief? In answer I sent a wreath of a hundred white camellias enfolding a single half-blown red rose—the scentless white flowers for the departed, and the glowing blossom—that was for him.

CHAPTER IV.

Three weeks had passed. Poor Conrad Althaus had proposed and been rejected by Lilli. But his courage remained undaunted, and he visited us as before.

Expressing my surprise at his loyalty, I said, "It delights me that you are not offended, and it proves that you are not so serious, for despised love often turns into resentment!"

"You mistake me, dear cousin; I love Lilli to distraction. First, I thought it was you whom I cared for, then Rosa, but now I am certain it is and always will remain Lilli."

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