

Literature, &c.

THE BRITISH MAGAZINES,
FOR DECEMBER.From the London Metropolitan.
ISSENDORFF.

FREDERIC VON ISSENDORFF was the friend I most valued. I looked upon him with a painful interest, he was so delicate, so melancholy. Deep feeling and noble thought were stamped on his plate and almost femininely-beautiful features. He was of a middle height, slender and graceful, with light hair and pale blue eyes. His very appearance prepossessed you in his favour. Bodily he was not strong, and yet he never shrank unexertion. Brave as a lion, proud and sensitive, he was peculiarly alive to slight and injury, perhaps the more so because of his poverty, sad inheritance of his lofty and once powerful line, and from his want of physical strength, which sometimes would subject him to insults from which others would escape. But thus did his mind subdue his body to his will that the strongest could not resist the fierce and sudden impulse of his anger. He scorned the confining trammels of college discipline, but rose superior to them: he did not sink into the gulf of dissipation, or poetry threw a halo around his thoughts, and the feelings of true chivalry were in his breast. In the middle ages he would have been a knightly troubadour; in the present he was the unvalued, unappreciated member of a society that knew him not—born to waste his mighty talents in obscurity, to die unpitied and unknown.

His companions never liked him, and he was unkindly treated by all—unkindly as far as they dared, for they had learned to fear the mighty spirit that seemed slumbering among flowers. Yet this preyed upon him. That fiery spirit could not sink and droop; but its own flames devoured it. I felt that he was doomed to be unhappy, for he was, as it were, not a being of this earth, at least not of this age. His feeling was called sentimentality; his high spirit, morbid pride, noble bearing, haughtiness—that sat ill, it was remarked, on one whose poverty would force him to fill a dependent and inferior station in life. And there were many among his colleagues, who, rich and influential, would stand above him in after years, and it in their power to command his obedience.

Haughty spirit! how wilt thou learn to bend to those thou scornest?—to those infinitely beneath thee? To those who have quitted before thee, all feeble as thou art? Issendorff, much I fear thy noble and gentle heart will be deeply hurt—wounded to the death. Oh, had I the power of a God to bring those who will crush thee to thy feet. Bear up, brave spirit, thou mayest triumph yet, and re-light the star of thy destiny with an immortal fire.

It was with feelings of happy hope that I beheld him form an attachment for a young lady, as remarkable for beauty as for good qualities. She was in fact, the counterpart of himself; she echoed all his thoughts and feelings for they were her own. He beheld his sentiments again in hers, though in gentler guise, as the glorious star of heaven sees itself reflected in the mellowing mirror of the sea, as lovely, but more softly bright. They were made for each other, if ever mortals were; it were cruelty to part them—nay, it were vain; for those two congenial spirits were sure to draw together, even if separated by distance or by death, they would still be together in their thoughts. Need it be told how passionately two beings like these were attached? Could it be otherwise, when the one was, as it were, the vital principal of the other. They loved—they—that tells all.

Of the highest birth, her choice would honor the first in the land, and men marvelled when she stooped to the poor young student; marvelled, though he was as highly born as she. An additional dislike was felt against Issendorff from this moment, and I trembled lest some insolent fop should intentionally insult him, perhaps by her side. I trembled every morning, lest I should hear of his death, or see his glorious form borne past me, pale and cold, on a bier, with the sword wound of death upon his breast. I watched him with an intensity of pain, as his brow clouded and his eye flashed whenever a remark of doubtful meaning was made by any empty fool, or whenever the name of Louisa Von Adelheim was mentioned. And how often was that word spoken by the frivolous and depraved. He felt it a profanation from their lips; I feared lest it should be coupled with any light remark.

How unlike was Adolph von Adelheim to his sister and to Issendorff! He was fully as proud, but dissipated, wild, reckless, addicted to every vice—need I say more than this?—he was a professed duelist. I feared that Issendorff and he would never be on friendly terms, and I was not deceived.—He treated the suitor of his sister with marked rudeness, nay, almost insult. All wounded at Issendorff's forbearance in submitting to such conduct, and detracting remarks were circulated as to its cause. The sneers and cutting jests were scarcely concealed in his presence. I saw the indignation that overwhelmed him ready to burst forth every moment, but he restrained it still.

The young student's suit had never been kindly looked on by the family of Adelheim, who had intended a more wealthy and powerful alliance for their daughter. Her mother, it is true, favored him, but all the rest, foremost among whom was Adolphi were decidedly again it. Count Otto of Altweil was the constant companion of the latter, and never were two friends more suited to each other. Count Otto was a professed admirer of Louisa Von Adelheim, and as such was much befriended by the family; indeed Adolph was heard to say, he was determined that none other than his friend should be the husband of his sister. He often brought him to her, reeking from intemperance and tavern brawls, and polluted her presence with his company, O heavens! should he and Issendorff meet before her. But the firm and haughty conduct of Louisa somewhat awed him, and moreover he had a deadly fear of his rival.

Once, however, it was rumored they had met alone in the house of Adelheim; Adolph was fortunately not there, and it said the interview finished by the Count's being summarily ejected out of the door by the hands of Issendorff, but the former never divulged the secret, and it is certain he never resented it openly; though from this moment, he conceived a deadly and implacable hatred to his rival, and doomed his destruction. He feigned a more deep and fervent attachment to the beautiful Louisa, and assuring her brother that Issendorff was the only obstacle to his success, he inflamed his mind against the predestined victim to such an extent, that he succeeded in making him pledge his honor never to sanction an alliance between the houses of Issendorff and Adelheim.

'I will soon and in a safe way put an end to his pretensions,' said Adolph; 'you know how I get rid of disagreeable people. I never failed yet.'

The count applauded, and the deadly conspiracy was formed.

The intention of these no better than murderers reached the ears of a friend, who mentioned them to me. I immediately imparted them to Issendorff, at the same time imploring him to avoid any altercation with the count or with Adolph. He turned deadly pale at my words.

'It is fated!' he said, 'but nothing on earth shall induce me to fight Adolph!'

I was happy to hear him say this, and tried to strengthen him in a resolution I thought almost impracticable for him to keep, knowing Adelheim's character and his own.

A few days after there was a general convivial meeting of the students, to celebrate an anniversary. Issendorff called at my lodgings in the morning. He was depressed and irritated. A paper containing the most insulting allusions to himself had been nailed to his door during the night, and when he awoke, a crowd, among whom were the count and Adolph, were reading and laughing at it. He rushed down, and had it torn away—every one denied any knowledge of the author, though he well knew him in the brother of his beloved, but he had not dared to ask him!

'I know that dreadful misfortune will befall me—I feel it.'

'Cheer up,' I replied. All will end well. But for the love of heaven avoid altercation with Adolph.

He promised to follow my injunction. I begged him not to go to the meeting that day.

'I must,' he replied, 'it would be a voluntary exclusion from their circle; besides, I have retired enough of late. I must brave the storm. And, by heaven, let any one but say a word of doubtful meaning, and I will make such an example of him as will, I trust, deter the rest from venturing too near me.'

With feelings excited to agony, I joined in the gay and noisy circle assembled on that day. The count and Adolph were there when I entered. They were speaking of Issendorff, but in an under tone; for he had some friends present, though very few among the many, who would not be backward to assert his cause, but I

heard enough to fear the worst. At length, among the latest, Issendorff entered with his usual proud and haughty steps, but with more than usual fire in his pale blue melancholy eyes. I hurried to him.

'For mercy's sake depart Frederic; they are exasperated against you, and something dreadful will happen! Go, and we will try and pacify them, or intimidate, for you have still some trusty friends among us. Go there is a conspiracy against you.'

Issendorff frowned upon me. What! dare you think I fear them?

'No, no, but Adolph.—'

'Fear not, I have already told you that nothing shall provoke me to quarrel with him.'

He left me, and passed into the centre of the saloon. He will not succeed, thought I. Must that glorious spirit die?—must that amiable youth be murdered.

I watched him with intense anxiety.

Foremost among groups stood Adolph von Adelheim and Count Otto von Altweil.

Frederick advanced to the most friendly and courteous manner, extending his hand. Adolph stared haughtily at him without returning his greeting, and then turned his back upon him; a most deadly insult. Issendorff, turned ashy pale, but he did not resent it! With ready presence of mind he addressed a friend who stood near, without appearing to have noticed it. But a scarcely-suppressed laugh and an open sneer came from nearly all present. I burned with as deep an indignation as my friend. The count, fearful of offending saluted him courteously: he returned the salutation with an insulting laugh, and, pushing him rudely aside, seemed trying to provoke him to a rejoinder, but the obsequious coward drew back. This action served to divert the pleasantries into another channel, and a sudden interest seemed awakened in favour of the doomed Issendorff.

For a time all remained quiet, till towards the close of the repast when perhaps all were somewhat heated with wine.

'What say you,' cried Wilhelm von Gandolf to Adelheim, 'if we drink the health of your future brother-in-law?'

It was the concerted signal.

'With all my heart,' was the reply.

'Well then,—Frederic von Issendorff.'

'Who?' cried Adelheim—'do you think I will ever grant my sister to that lying coward. It is Otto, Count of Altweil.'

'Who said these words?' Issendorff asked in a calm, deep, concentrated voice. 'Count Otto, you know the Lady Louisa is mine, and if you dare even mention her name, I will write oblivion of it with my sword upon your heart. The name of Adelheim shall not be polluted by coming from so vile a mouth as yours.'

'Aha!' cried one of the company, 'I will be your second, Count. The sooner this is finished the better.'

Count Otto shuddered, and looked to Adelheim; he understood him.

'It was I who said these words, he thundered, 'and I repeat them.'

'Retract them then, Adolph! for the love of heaven; I will not, I cannot fight with you. You know it, and it is ungenerous in you to insult me. Now, retract those words, I implore you!'

'Dastardly villain, I repeat them,' roared Adelheim. 'Leave my sight, or I shall strike you!'

'Come but near me, and I will fell you to the ground,' thundered Issendorff, now rising in a vehement passion—'but all the powers of hell shall not make me fight you.'

'Then you must leave this room,' shouted many voices; 'a dishonored coward dare not be among us.'

'Come one, come all,' cried Issendorff, 'I will not move a step, and liar and coward in the teeth of all who have spoken these words to me. You know I cannot fight him. Here, Count Otto! bring us swords.'

'No, no!' roared Adelheim, 'I appeal to our seniors; I have the first right. Silence and hear!'

He had, according to their laws of honor.

'Frederick von Issendorff, you must accept the challenge of Adolph von Adelheim, or leave this room branded with eternal infamy, never more to appear before us. And every student that meets you shall have the right to strike, without giving you satisfaction.'

'Then be it so,' said Issendorff, with a deadly smile: 'Adelheim, I accept your challenge.' He calmly reseated himself and a heavy silence reigned for a time.

'Let us finish this business at once,' said the challenger.

'No!—not till to-morrow morning. Seniors, I have the right to enforce that.'

They agreed. Then Issendorff filled his glass. He raised it to his lips, exclaiming: 'To the health and long life of Adolph von Adelheim!' I knew his meaning—none pledged the toast; the feeling of all was turning against the challenger.

Having emptied his goblet, he rose and left the room.

He immediately went to his lodgings and calmly wrote to his family and more intimate friends, and having arranged his affairs, he hastened to the house of Louisa, though already late in the evening. He felt certain that he should fall; for Adelheim was one of the first masters of his weapon at the university, and though himself inferior to few, he had resolved on not killing the brother of Louisa, and had determined on perishing himself, if otherwise that dreadful result could not be avoided.

It may therefore be supposed with what feelings he entered that house! The lingering rays of the summer sun were on the laden trees that waved over its windows; the music of the evening bird floated on the perfumed air, that had a magic soothing power, as though it was formed of the sighs of angels; but, oh! sweeter, far sweeter than the night-bird's note, came the voice of Louisa through the open casement! Frederick paused on the threshold and listened—she was singing a song of his own—a shudder ran through him as he thought that, in the noisy hall he had just quitted, heartless enemies were discussing his death!

'O God, must I leave all this?' sighed Issendorff.

He never mentioned what had passed, what was still to come; a miser of his still remaining few short moments of happiness, he would not destroy them; he lengthened them till the chiming hours one by one warned him away by their knell-like voice, then he departed. He had never appeared more gay than on that evening, but there was a wildness, a sudden burst of melancholy, mingling with his gaiety, that startled the unsuspecting Louisa. Alas! she understood all on the morrow. He asked her for a remembrance, she gave him her scarf; an ominous present, for it was a war-gift.

The sun rose glorious over the vine clad banks of the Neckar that came sparkling from the distant hills, as though it were a vein of light bearing celestial radiance to the earth.

In a woodland meadow by its side, Frederick von Issendorff and Adolph von Adelheim met in deadly combat. The Count was the second of the latter, a near relation was by the side of the former.

With his usual proud bearing Issendorff stepped before his opponent. The scarf of Louisa was wound round his sword-arm, that he might never forget that it was her brother with whom he fought.

He spoke, but this time sternly and haughtily.

'Adelheim, what you said yesterday may have been under the influence of wine. Retract them.'

Count Otto stepped forward.

'It is to you I speak, von Adelheim. I exchange nothing but blows with that dastard by your side. Answer me.'

'The swords,' roared Adelheim.

The swords were measured and given to the respective parties.

'En garde.' And with the swiftness of lightning the combatants started into the position of defence, and the seconds fell back. With graceful courtesy Issendorff made his salute; it was not returned by Adelheim, whose rapier flickered in his hand as though instinct with life. In an instant the point hovered over the heart of Issendorff, who calmly and scornfully, with scarcely an apparent movement of his blade, parried the fierce thrusts of his adversary. Never were combatants more ably matched. The sword of Adelheim flashed around Issendorff in the morning sun, like a lightning shower, as it quivered in his grasp.

'Have a care,' cried Issendorff, 'or you will fall on my blade.'

'Insolent boaster, then thrust it home.'

With fresh fury he rushed on his opponent; none could see the rapid motion of their weapons, none could guess the issue, when suddenly, as though with a lightning shock, Adelheim leaped high into the air, and fell a corpse upon the ground. Issendorff's rapier had passed through his heart.

At this unexpected and unintended issue the survivor stood horror-stricken.

'The murderer of her brother!' he ejaculated. 'Lost! for ever lost!'

'Fly,' cried his friend, 'before the minions of justice come. See! that dastard Aitwell has deserted his principal.'