

JENNIE BAXTER, JOURNALIST.*

By COTTREL HOE.

Illustrated by ADOLF THIEDE.

NUMBER V.—THE INDISCRETION OF THE PRIME MINISTER.



AS Jennie rapidly hurried away from the office of Mr. Cadbury Taylor, there arose in her mind some agitation as to what the detective would think of her sudden flight. She was convinced that, up to the moment of leaving him so abruptly, he had not the slightest suspicion she herself, to whom he was then talking, was the person he had been searching for up and down Europe. What must he think of one who, while speaking with him, suddenly, without a word of leave-taking, disappeared as if the earth had opened and swallowed her, and all because the handle of the door to the inner room had turned? Then the excuse she had given for not wishing to meet Lord Donal must have struck him as ridiculously inadequate. When she reached her desk and reflected with more calmness over the situation, she found no cause to censure herself for her hasty departure; although she had acted on sudden impulse, she saw there had been nothing else to do; another moment and she would have been face to face with Lord Donal himself.

Next day brought a note from the detective which somewhat reassured her. He apologised for having made the appointment without her permission, and explained that Lord Donal's unexpected arrival in London, and his stubborn unbelief that it had been the Princess herself whom he met at the ball, seemingly left the detective no alternative but to call on the person who had so persistently advanced the theory, to explain it to the one most intimately concerned. It had not occurred to him at the time to think that Miss Baxter might object to meet Lord Donal, who was an entire stranger to her; but now he saw where he was wrong, etc., etc., etc. This note did much to convince Jennie that, after all, the detective had not seen the clues which appeared to be spread

so plainly before his eyes. Cadbury Taylor, however, said nothing about the search being ended, and a few days later Jennie received a disquieting letter from the Princess von Steinheimer.

"My dear Jennie," her Highness wrote, "I am sure the detectives are after you, and so I thought it best to send you a word of warning. Of course it is only surmise on my part, but for days there has been a woman hovering about the castle, trying to get information from my servants. My maid came directly to me and told me what she knew. The woman detective had spoken to her. This inquisitive person, who had come from Paris, wished particularly to know whether I had been seen about the castle during the week in which the Duchess of Chiselhurst's ball took place; and so this leads me to suppose that some one is making inquiries for you. It must be either Lord Donal Stirling or the Duke of Chiselhurst, but I rather think it is the former. I have written an indignant letter to Lord Donal, accusing him of having caused detectives to haunt the castle. I have not yet received a reply, but Lord Donal is a truthful person, and in a day or two I expect to find out whether or not he has a hand in this business. Meanwhile, Jennie, be on your guard, and I will write you again as soon as I have something further to tell."

The reading of this letter greatly increased Jennie's fears, for she felt assured that, stupid as the men undoubtedly were, they verged so closely on the brink of discovery, they were almost certain to stumble upon the truth if the investigation was continued. She wrote a hurried note to the Princess, imploring her to be cautious, and not inadvertently give any clue that would lead to her discovery. Her letter evidently crossed one from the Princess herself. Lord Donal had confessed, said the letter, and promised never, never to do it again. "He says that before my letter was received he had stopped the detectives, who were doing no good and

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apparently only annoying innocent people. He says the search is ended, as far as the detective is concerned, and that I need fear no more intrusions from inquiry agents, male or female. He apologised very handsomely, but says he has not given up hopes of finding the lady who disappeared. And now, Jennie, I hope that you will admit my cleverness. You see that I only had a word or two from my maid as a clue, but I unravelled the whole plot and at once discovered who was the instigator of it, so I think I wouldn't make a bad detective myself. I am tremendously interested in episodes like this. I believe if I had known nothing of the impersonation, and if the case had been put in my hands, I should have discovered you long ago. Can't you think of some way in which my undoubted talent for research may be made use of? You don't know how much I envy you in your newspaper office, always with some mystery on hand to solve. It must be like being the editor of a puzzle department. I wish you would let me help you next time you have something important to do. Will you promise?

"When you write again, please send your letter to Vienna, as we are going into residence there, my husband having been unexpectedly called to the capital. He holds an important position in the Government, as perhaps you remember."

Jennie was delighted to know that all inquiry had ceased, and she wrote a long letter of gratitude to the Princess. She concluded her epistle by saying: "It is perfectly absurd of you to envy one who has to work as hard as I. You are the person to be envied. It is not all beer and skittles in a newspaper office, which is a good thing, for I don't like beer, and I don't know what skittles is or are. But I promise you that the next time I have an interesting case on hand I shall write and give you full particulars, and I am sure that together we shall be invincible."

But one trouble leaves merely to give place to another in this life. Jennie was disturbed to notice that Mr. Hardwick was becoming more and more confidential with her. He sat down by her desk whenever there was a reasonable excuse for doing so, and he consulted her on matters important and on matters trivial. An advance of salary came to her, and she knew it was through his influence with the board of directors. Although Mr. Hardwick was sharp and decisive in business matters, he proved an awkward man where his affections

were concerned, and he often came and sat by the girl's desk, evidently wishing to say something, and yet quite as evidently having nothing to say; and thus the situation became embarrassing. Jennie was a practical girl and had no desire to complicate the situation by allowing her employer to fall in love with her, yet it was impossible to go to him and ask that his attentions might be limited strictly to a business basis. The crisis, however, was brought on by Mr. Hardwick himself. One day, when they were alone together, he said abruptly—

"That romance in high life which you were investigating with Mr. Chadwick Cadbury Taylor did not come to anything?"

"No, Mr. Hardwick."

"Then don't you think we might enact



"He rose quickly, without making further attempt at explanation."

a romance in high life in this very room; it is high enough from the street to entitle it to be called a romance in high life," and the editor grinned uneasily, like an unready man who hopes to relieve a dilemma by a poor joke.

Jennie, however, did not laugh and did not look up at him, but continued to scribble shorthand notes on the paper before her.

"Ah, Mr. Hardwick!" she said with a sigh, "I see you have discovered my secret, although I had hoped to conceal it even from your alert eyes. I am, indeed, in the situation of *Ralph Rackstraw* in 'Pinafore,' 'I love, and love, alas! above my station,' and now that you know half, you may as well know all. It arose out of that unfortunate ball given by the Duchess of Chiselhurst,

which will haunt me all the rest of my life, I fear," said Jennie, still without looking up.

Mr. Hardwick smothered an ejaculation, and was glad that the girl's eyes were not upon him. There was a pause of a few moments' duration between them. He took the path that was left open to him, fondly flattering himself that, while he had stumbled inadvertently upon her romance, he had kept his own secret safe.

"I—I have no right to intrude on your confidences, Miss Baxter," he said finally with an effort, "and I hope you will excuse me for—for——"

"Oh! I have been sure for some days you knew it," interrupted the girl, looking up, but not at him. "I have been neglecting my work, I fear, and so you were quite right in speaking."

"No, your work is all right; it wasn't that exactly—but never mind, we won't speak of this any more, for I see it embarrasses you."

"Thank you, Mr. Hardwick," said Jennie, again bending her eyes on the desk before her.

The man saw the colour come and go in her cheeks, and thought he had never beheld anyone so entrancing. He rose quickly, without making further attempt at explanation, and left the room. One or two tear drops stained the paper on which the girl was scribbling. She didn't like giving pain to anyone, but could not hold herself to blame for what had happened. She made up her mind to leave the *Daily Bugle* and seek employment elsewhere, but next day Mr. Hardwick showed no trace of disappointment, and spoke to her with that curt imperiousness which had heretofore been his custom.

"Miss Baxter," he said, "have you been reading the newspapers with any degree of attention lately?"

"Yes, Mr. Hardwick."

"Have you been watching the drift of foreign politics?"

"Do you refer to that speech by the Prime Minister of Austria a week or two ago?"

"Yes, that is what I have in my mind. As you know, then, it amounted almost to a declaration of war against England—almost, but not quite. It was a case of saying too much or of not saying enough; however, it was not followed up, and the Premier has been as dumb as a graven image ever since. England has many enemies in different parts of the world, but I must confess that this speech by the Austrian Premier came as a

surprise. There must have been something hidden, which is not visible from the outside. The Premier is too astute a man not to know exactly what his words meant, and he was under no delusion as to how England would take them. It is a case, then, of, 'When I was so quickly done for, I wonder what I was begun for'—that is what all Europe is asking."

"Is it not generally supposed, Mr. Hardwick, that his object was to consolidate Austria and Hungary? I understood that local politics were at the bottom of his fiery speech."

"Quite so, but the rousing of the war spirit in Austria and Hungary was useless unless that spirit is given something to do. It needs a war, not a threat of war, to consolidate Austria and Hungary. If the speech had been followed up by hostile action, or by another outburst that would make war inevitable, I could understand it. The tone of the speech indicates that the Prime Minister meant business at the time he gave utterance to it. Something has occurred meanwhile to change the situation, and what that something is, all the newspapers in Europe have been trying to find out. We have had our regular Vienna representative at work ever since the words were uttered, and for the past two weeks he has been assisted by one of the cleverest men I could send him from London; but, up to date, both have failed. Now I propose that you go quietly to Vienna; I shall not let either of the men know you are at work on the affair at which they have laboured with such little success; for both are good men, and I do not want to discourage either of them; still, above all things, I wish to have the solution of this mystery. So it occurred to me last night that you might succeed where others had failed. What do you think of it?"

"I am willing to try," said Miss Baxter, as there flashed across her mind an idea that here was a case in which the Princess von Steinheimer could be of the greatest assistance to her.

"It has been thought," went on the editor, "that the Emperor is extremely averse to having trouble with England or any other country. Still, if that were the case, a new Cabinet would undoubtedly have been formed after this intemperate address of the Premier; but this man still holds his office, and there has been neither explanation nor apology from Court or Cabinet. I am convinced that there is something behind all this, a

wheel within a wheel of some sort, because, the day after the speech, there came a rumour from Vienna that an attempt had been made on the life of the Emperor or of the Premier; it was exceedingly vague, but it was alleged that a dynamite explosion had taken place in the palace. This was promptly contradicted, but we all know what official contradictions amount to. There is internal trouble of some kind in the Court at Vienna, and if we could publish the full details, such an article would give us a European reputation. When could you be ready to begin your journey, Miss Baxter?"

"I am ready now."

"Well, in an affair like this it is best to lose no time; you can go to-morrow morning, then?"

"Oh, certainly, but I must leave the office at once, and you must get someone to finish the work I am on."

"I will attend to that," said the editor.

Thus relieved, Jennie betook herself to a telegraph office. She knew that if she wrote a letter to the Princess, who was now in Vienna, she would probably herself reach that city as soon as her note, so she telegraphed that something important was on hand which would take her to Vienna by next day's Orient express, and intimated that it was a matter in which she might need the assistance of the Princess. Then she hastened to her rooms to pack up. That evening there came an answering telegram from Vienna. The Princess asked her to bring her ball dress and all the rest of her finery. The lady added that she herself would be at the railway station, and asked Jennie to telegraph to her *en route*. It was evident that her Highness was quite prepared to engage in whatever scheme there was on hand, and this fact encouraged Jennie to hope that success perhaps awaited her.

True to her promise, the Princess von Steinheimer was waiting at the immense railway station of Vienna, and she received her friend with gushing effusion. Jennie left the train as neat as when she had entered it, for many women have the faculty of taking long journeys without showing the dishevelled effect which protracted railway travelling seems to have upon the masculine, and probably more careless, portion of humanity.

"Oh, you dear girl!" cried the Princess; "you cannot tell how glad I am to see you. I was just yearning for someone to talk English to. I am so tired of French and German, although they flatter me by saying

that I speak those two languages well; yet English is my own tongue, and it is so delightful to talk with one who can understand every blessed word you say, which you can easily see those who pretend to speak English in Vienna do not. What long chats we shall have! And now come this way to the carriage. There is a man here to look after your luggage. You are coming right home with me and are going to stay with me as long as you are in Vienna. Don't say, 'No,' nor make any excuse, nor talk of going to an hotel, for a suite of rooms is all ready for you, and your luggage will be there before we are. Now let us enter the carriage, for I am just pining to hear what it is you have on hand. Some delicious scandal, I hope."



"She telegraphed that something important was on hand."

"No," answered Jennie; "it pertains to Government matters."

"Oh, dear!" cried the Princess; "how tiresome! Politics are so dull."

"I don't think this case is dull," said Jennie; "because it has brought Austria and England to the verge of war."

"What a dreadful idea! I hadn't heard anything of it. When did this happen?"

"Less than a month ago," and Jennie related the whole circumstance, giving a synopsis of the Premier's speech.

"But I see nothing in that speech to cause war," protested the Princess. "It is as mild as new milk."

"I don't pretend to understand diplomacy," continued Jennie, blushing slightly as she

remembered Lord Donal; and it seemed that the same thought struck the Princess at the same moment, for she looked quizzically at Jennie and burst out into a laugh.

"You may laugh; but I tell you that this is a serious business. They say it only needed a second 'new milk' speech from the Premier to have England answer most politely in words of honey, and next instant the two countries would have been at each other's throats."

"Suppose we write to Lord Donal in St. Petersburg," suggested the Princess, still laughing, "and ask him to come to Vienna and help us? He understands all about diplomacy. By the way, Jennie, did Lord Donal ever find out whom he met at the ball that night?"

"No, he didn't," answered Jennie shortly.

"Don't you ever intend to let him know? Are you going to leave the romance unfinished, like one of Henry James's novels?"

"It isn't a romance; it is simply a very distressing incident which I have been trying to forget ever since. It is all very well for you to laugh, but if you ever mention the subject again I'll leave you and go to an hotel."

"Oh, no, you won't," chirruped the Princess brightly; "you daren't. You know I am the goddess of the machine; at any time I can send a letter to Lord Donal and set the poor young man's mind at rest. So you see, Miss Jennie, you will have to talk very sweetly and politely to me and not make any threats, because I am like those dreadful persons in the sensational plays who hold the guilty secrets of other people and blackmail them. But you are a nice girl, and I won't say anything you don't want to hear said. Now, what is it you wish to find out about this political crisis?"

"I want to discover why the Premier did not follow up his speech with another. He must have known when he spoke how his words would be taken in England; therefore it is thought that he had some plans which unforeseen circumstances intervening have nullified. I want to know what those unforeseen circumstances were. For the past fortnight the *Daily Bugle* has had two men here in Vienna trying to throw some light on the dark recesses of diplomacy. Up to date they have failed, but at any moment they may succeed; it was because they failed that I am sent here. Now, have you anything to suggest, Madame la Princesse?"

"I suggest, Jennie, that we put our heads together and learn all that those clever

diplomats wish to hide. Have you no plans yourself?"

"I have no very definite plan, but I have a general scheme. These men I spoke of are trying to discover what other men are endeavouring to conceal. All the officials are on their guard; they are high placed, and are not likely to be got at by bribery. They are clever, alert men of the world, so hoodwinking them is out of the question; therefore I think my two fellow journalists have a difficult task before them."

"But it is the same task that you have before you; why is it not as difficult for you, Jennie, as for them?"

"Because I propose to work with people who are not on their guard, and there is where you can help me, if you are not shocked at my proposal. Each official has a wife, or at least most of them have. Some of these wives, in all probability, possess the information that we would like to get. Women will talk more freely with women than men will with men. Now, I propose to leave the officials severely alone and to interview their wives."

The Princess clapped her hands.

"Excellent!" she cried. "The women of Vienna are the greatest gossips you ever heard chattering together. I have never taken any interest in politics, otherwise I suppose I might have become possessed of some important Government secrets. Now, Jennie, I'll tell you what I propose doing. I shall give a formal tea next Thursday afternoon. I shall invite to that tea a dozen, or two dozen, or three dozen wives of high-placed officials about the Court. My husband will like that, because he is always complaining that I do not pay enough attention to the ladies of the political circle of Vienna. He takes a great interest in politics, you know. If we discover nothing at the first tea-meeting, we will have another, and another, and another, until we do. We are sure to invite the right woman on one occasion or another, and when we find her I'll warrant the secret will soon belong to us. Ah, here we are at home, and we will postpone the discussion of our plans until you have had something to eat and are rested a bit."

The carriage drew up at the magnificent palace, well known in Vienna, which belonged to the Prince von Steinheimer; and shortly afterwards Jennie Baxter found herself in possession of the finest suite of rooms she had ever beheld in her life. Jennie laughed as she looked round her

rooms and noted their luxuriant appointments.

"These are not exactly what we should call 'diggings' in London, are they?" she said to the Princess, who stood by her side, delighted at the pleasure of her friend. "We often read of poor penny-a-liners in their garrets; but I don't think any penny-a-liner ever had such a garret as this placed at his disposal."

"I knew you would like the rooms," cried the Princess gaily. "I like them myself, and I hope they will help to induce you to stay in Vienna as long as you can. I have given you my own maid Gretlich, and I assure you it isn't every friend I would lend her to; she is a model servant."

"Oh, but you mustn't do that," said Jennie. "I cannot rob you of your maid and also be selfish enough to monopolise these rooms."

"You are not robbing me; in fact, I am, perhaps, a little artful in giving you Gretlich, for she is down in the dumps this last week or two, and I don't know what in the world is the matter with her. I suspect it is some love affair; but she will say nothing, although I have asked her time and again what is the trouble. Now, you are such a cheery, consoling young woman that I thought if Gretlich were in your service for a time she might brighten up and be her own self again. So you see, instead of robbing me, I am really taking advantage of your good nature."

"I am afraid you are just saying that to make it easier for me to be selfish; still, you are so generous, Princess, that I am not going to object to anything you do, but just give myself up to luxury while I stay in Vienna."

"That is right. Ah, here is Gretlich. Now, Gretlich, I want you to help make Miss Baxter's stay here so pleasant that she will never want to leave us."

"I shall do my best, your Highness," said the girl, with quiet deference.

The Princess left the two alone together, and Jennie saw that Gretlich was not the least ornamental appendage to the handsome suite of rooms. Gretlich was an excellent example of that type of fair women for which Vienna is noted; but she was, as the Princess had said, extremely downcast, and Jennie, who had a deep sympathy for all who worked, spoke kindly to the girl and endeavoured to cheer her. There was something of unaccustomed tenderness in the compassionate tones of Jennie's voice that

touched the girl, for, after a brief and ineffectual effort at self-control, she broke down and wept. To her pitying listener she told her story. She had been betrothed to a soldier whose regiment was stationed in the Burg. When last the girl saw her lover he was to be that night on guard in the Treasury. Before morning a catastrophe of some kind occurred. The girl did not know quite what had happened. Some said there had been a dreadful explosion and her lover had lost his life. Neither the soldier's relatives nor his betrothed were allowed to see him after the disaster. He had been buried secretly, and it appeared to be the intention of the authorities to avoid all

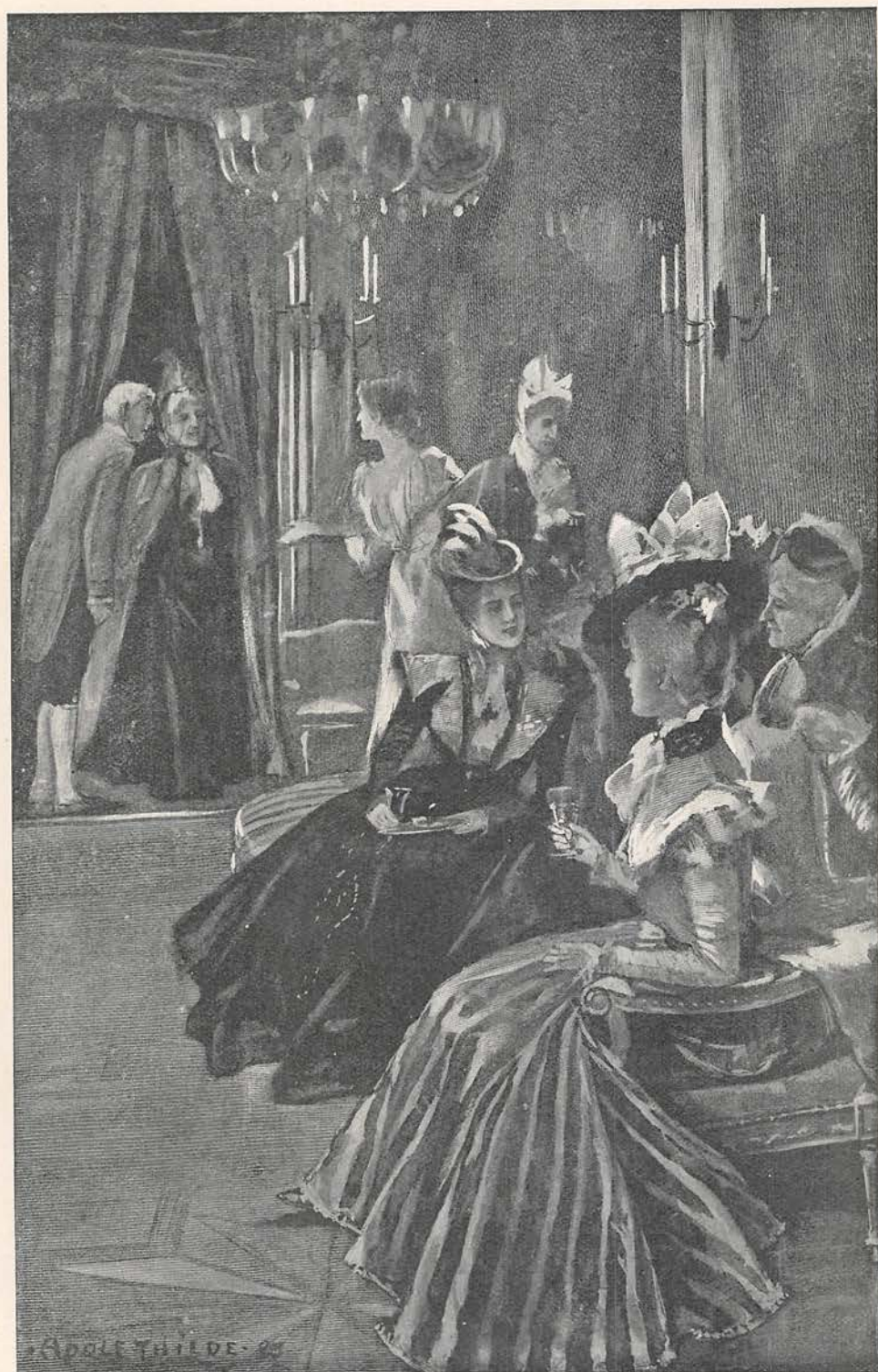


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"She broke down and wept."

publicity. The relatives and the betrothed of the dead soldier had been warned to keep silence and seek no further information. It was not till several days after her lover's death that Gretlich, anxious because he did not keep his appointment with her, and not hearing from him, fearing that he was ill, began to make inquiries; then she received together the information and the caution.

In the presence of death all consolers are futile, and Jennie realised this as she endeavoured as well as she could to comfort the girl. Her heart was so much enlisted in this that perhaps her intellect was the less active; but here she stood on the very threshold of the secret she had come to Vienna to discover, and yet had not the



"There was a brilliant assemblage in the spacious salon of the Princess von Steinheimer."

slightest suspicion that the girl's tragedy and her own mission were interwoven. Jennie had wondered at the stupidity of Cadbury Taylor, who failed to see what seemed so plainly before him, yet here was Jennie herself come a thousand miles, more or less, to obtain certain information, and here a sobbing girl was narrating the very item of news that she had come so far to learn—all of which would seem to show that none of us are so bright and clever as we imagine ourselves to be.

In the afternoon the Princess entered Jennie's sitting-room carrying in her hand a bunch of letters.

"There!" she cried, "while you have been resting I have been working, and we are not going to allow any time to be lost. I have written with my own hand invitations to about two dozen people to our tea on Thursday; among others, the wife of the Premier, Countess Stron. I expect you to devote yourself to that lady and tell me the result of the conversation after it is over. Have you been talking consolation to Gretlich? I came up here half-an-hour ago, and it seemed to me I heard the sound of crying in this room."

"Oh, yes," said Jennie, "she has been telling me all her trouble. It seems she had a lover in the army, and he has been killed in some accident in the Treasury."

"What kind of an accident?"

"Gretlich said there was an explosion there."

"Dear me! I hadn't heard of it. It is a curious thing that one must come from London to tell us our own news. An explosion in the Treasury! and so serious that a soldier was killed! That arouses my curiosity, so I shall just sit down and write another invitation to the wife of the Master of the Treasury."

"I wish you would, because I should like to know something further about this myself. Gretlich seems to have had but scant information regarding the occurrence, and I would like to know more about it so that I might tell her."

"We shall learn all about it from madame, and I must write that note at once for fear I shall forget it."

On Thursday afternoon there was a brilliant assemblage in the spacious salon of the Princess von Steinheimer. The rich attire of the ladies formed a series of vitrosopic pictures that were dazzling, for Viennese women are adepts in the art of dress, as are their Parisian sisters. Tea was served, not

in cups and saucers, as Jennie had been accustomed to, but in goblets of clear, thin Venetian glass, each set in a holder of encrusted filigree gold. There were all manner of delicious cakes, for which the city is celebrated. The tea itself had come overland through Russia from China and had not suffered the deterioration which an ocean voyage produces. The decoction was served clear, with sugar if desired, and a slice of lemon, and Jennie thought it the most delicious brew she had ever tasted.

"I am so sorry," whispered the Princess to Jennie when an opportunity occurred, "but the Countess Stron has sent a messenger to say that she cannot be present this afternoon. It seems her husband, the Premier, is ill, and she, like a good wife, remains at home to nurse him. This rather upsets our plans, doesn't it?"

"Oh, I don't know," replied Jennie. "It is more than likely that the wife of the Premier would be exceedingly careful not to discuss any political question in this company. I have counted more upon the wife of a lesser official than upon the Countess Stron."

"You are right," said the Princess. "And now come with me. I want to introduce you to the wife of the Master of the Treasury, and from her, perhaps, you can learn something of the accident that befell the lover of poor Gretlich."

The wife of the Master of the Treasury proved to be a garrulous old lady who evidently prided herself on knowing everything that was taking place about her. Jennie and she became quite confidential over their goblets of tea, a beverage of which the old lady seemed inordinately fond. As the conversation between them drifted on, Jennie saw that here was a person that would take a delight in telling everything she knew, and the only question which now arose was whether she knew anything Jennie wished to learn. But before she tried her on high politics the girl determined to find out more about the disaster that had made such an abrupt ending to Gretlich's young dream.

"I have been very much interested," she said, "in one of the maids here who lost her lover some weeks ago in an accident that occurred in the Treasury. The maid doesn't seem to know very much about what happened, and was merely told that her lover, a soldier who had been on guard there that night, was dead."

"Oh, dear, yes!" whispered the old lady, lowering her voice, "what a dreadful thing that was! four men killed and eight or nine

are now in the hospital. My poor husband has hardly had a wink of sleep since the event, and the Premier is ill in bed through the worry."

"Because of the loss of life?" asked Jennie innocently.

"Oh, no, no! the loss of life wouldn't matter; it is the loss of the money that is the serious thing, and how they are going to replace it or account for its disappearance I am sure I don't know. The deficiency is something over two hundred million florins. Was it not awful?"

"Was the building shattered to such an



"The war chest!" echoed Jennie, "what is that?"

extent?" inquired Jennie, who did not stop to think that such a sum would replace any edifice in Vienna, even if it had been wiped off the face of the earth.

"The Treasury was damaged, of course, but the repairs will not cost much. No, my child, it is a much more disturbing affair than the destruction of any state house in the Empire. What has made the Premier ill, and what is worrying my poor husband into an untimely grave, is nothing less than the loss of the war chest."

"The war chest!" echoed Jennie, "what is that?"

"My dear, every great nation has a war

chest. England has one, France, Germany, Russia—no matter how poor a nation may be, nor how difficult it is to collect the taxes, that nation must have a war chest. If war were to break out suddenly, even with the most prosperous country, there would be instant financial panic; ready money would be difficult to obtain; a loan would be practically impossible; and what war calls for the very instant it begins is money—not promises of money, not paper money, not silver money even, but gold; therefore, every nation which is in danger of war has a store of gold coin. This store is not composed mainly, or

even largely, of the coins of the nation which owns the store; it consists of the sovereigns of England, the louis d'or of Holland, the willems d'or of Holland, the eight-florin pieces of Austria, the double-crown of Germany, the half-imperials of Russia, the double-frederics of Denmark, and so on. All gold, gold, gold! I believe that in the war chest of Austria there were deposited coins of different nations to the value of something like two hundred million florins. My husband never told me exactly how much was there, but sometimes when things looked peaceable there was less money in the war chest than when there was imminent danger of the European outbreak which we all fear. The war chest of Austria was in a stone-vaulted room, one of the strongest dungeons in the Treasury. The public are admitted into several

rooms of the Treasury, but no stranger is allowed into that portion of the building which houses the war chest. This room is kept under guard night and day. For what happened my husband feels that he is in no way to blame, and I don't think his superiors are inclined to charge him with neglect of duty. It is a singular thing that the day before the disaster took place he of his own accord doubled the guard that watched over the room and also the approaches to it. The war chest was at its fullest. Never, so he tells me, was there so much money in the war chest as at that particular time. Something had occurred that in his opinion called

for extra watchfulness, and so he doubled the guard. But about midnight there was a tremendous explosion. The strong door communicating to the passage was wrenched from its hinges and flung outwards into the hallway. It is said that dynamite must have been used, and that in a very large quantity. Not a vestige of the chest remained but a few splintered pieces of iron. The four soldiers in the room were blown literally to pieces, and those in the passage-way were stunned by the shock. The fact that they were unconscious for some minutes seems to have given the criminal, whoever he was, his chance of escape. For, although an instant alarm was sent out, and none but those who had a right to be on the premises were allowed out or into the Treasury, yet no one was caught, nor has anyone been caught up to this day."

"But the gold, the gold?" cried Jennie eagerly.

"There was not a florin of it left. Every piece has disappeared. It is at once the most clever and the most gigantic robbery of money that has taken place within our knowledge."

"But such a quantity of gold," said Jennie, "must have been of enormous weight. Two hundred million florins! Why, that is twenty million pounds, isn't it? It would take a regiment of thieves to carry so much away. How has that been done? And where is the gold concealed?"

"Ah, my child, if you can answer your own questions the Austrian Government will pay you almost any sum you like to name. The police are completely baffled. Of course, nothing has been said of this gigantic robbery; but every exit from Vienna is watched, and not only that, but each frontier is guarded. What the Government wants, of course, is to get back its gold, the result of years of taxation, which cannot very easily be re-levied."

"And when did this robbery take place?" asked Jennie.

"On the night of the 17th."

"On the night of the 17th," repeated the girl, more to herself than to the voluble old woman; "and it was on the 16th that the Premier made his war speech."

"Exactly," said the old lady, who overheard the remark not intended for her ears; "and don't you think there was something striking in the coincidence?"

"I don't quite understand. What coincidence?"

"Well, you know the speech of the

Premier was against England. It was not a speech made on the spur of the moment, but was doubtless the result of many consultations, perhaps with Russia, perhaps with Germany—who knows? We have been growing very friendly with Russia of late; and as England has spies all over the world, doubtless her Government knew before the speech was made that it was coming; so the police appear to think that the whole resources of the British Government were set at the task of crippling Austria at a critical moment."

"Surely you don't mean, madame, that the Government of England would descend to burglary, robbery—yes, and murder, even, for the poor soldiers who guarded the treasure were as effectually murdered as if they had been assassinated in the street? You don't imagine that the British Government would stoop to such deeds as those?"

The old lady shook her head wisely.

"By the time you are my age, my dear, and have seen as much of politics as I have, you will know that Governments stop at nothing to accomplish their ends. No private association of thieves could have laid such plans as would have done away with two hundred millions of florins in gold, unless they had not only ample resources, but also a master brain to direct them. Nations hesitate at nothing where their interests are concerned. It was to the interest of no other Empire but England to deplete Austria at this moment, and see how complete her machinations are. No nation trusts another, and if Austria had proof that England is at the bottom of this robbery, she dare not say anything, because her war chest is empty. Then, again, she dare not allow either Germany or Russia to know how effectually she has been robbed, for no one can tell what either of these nations would do under the circumstances. The Government dare not let even its own people know what has happened. It is a stroke of vengeance marvellous in its finality. Austria is crippled for years to come, unless she can find the stolen gold on her own territory."

The old lady had worked herself up into such a state of excitement during her recital that she did not notice that most of her companion visitors had taken their leave, and when the Princess approached the two she arose with some trepidation.

"My dear Princess," she said, "your tea has been so good, and the company of your young compatriot has been so charming, that

I have done nothing but chatter, chatter, chatter away about things which should only be spoken of under one's breath, and now I must hurry away. May I venture to hope that you will honour me with your presence at one of my receptions when I send you a card?"

"I shall be delighted to do so," replied the Princess, with that gracious condescension which became her so well.

The garrulous old lady was the last to take her leave, and when the Princess was left alone with her guest, she cried—



"'Everything,' replied the girl, walking up and down the floor in excitement."

"Jennie, I have found out absolutely nothing. What have you discovered?"

"Everything!" replied the girl, walking up and down the floor in excitement over the finding of such a bonanza of news.

"You don't tell me so! Now do sit down and let me know the full particulars at once."

When Jennie's exciting story was finished she said—

"You see, this robbery explains why the Premier did not follow up his warlike speech. The police seem to think that England has had a hand in this robbery, but of course that is absurd."

"I am not so sure of that," replied the Princess, taking, as she spoke, the Chicago point of view, and forgetting for the moment her position among the aristocracy of Europe. "England takes most things it can get its hands on, and she is not too slow to pick up a gold mine here and there, so why should she hesitate when the gold is already minted for her?"

"It is too absurd for argument," continued Jennie calmly, "so we won't talk of that phase of the subject. I must get away to England instantly. Let us find out when the first train leaves."

"Nonsense!" protested the Princess; "what do you need to go to England for? You have seen nothing of Vienna."

"Oh, I can see Vienna another time; I must get to England with this account of the robbery."

"Won't your paper pay for telegraphing such an important piece of news?"

"Oh, yes; there would be no difficulty about that, but I dare not trust either the post or the telegraph in a case like this. The police are on the watch."

"But couldn't you send it through by a code? My father used always to do his cabling by code; it saved a lot of money and also kept other people from knowing what his business was."

"I have a code, but I hesitate about trusting even to that."

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said the Princess. "I want you to stay in Vienna."

"Oh, I will return," said Jennie. "I've only just had a taste of this delightful city. I'll come right back."

"I can't trust you to do anything of the kind. When you get to London you will stay there. Now here is what I propose, and it will have the additional advantage of saving your paper a day. We will run down together into Italy—to Venice; then you can take down your code and telegraph from there in perfect safety. When that is done you will return here to Vienna with me. And another thing, you may be sure your editor will want you to stay right here on the

spot to let him know of any outcome of this sensational *dénouement*."

"That isn't a bad idea," murmured Jennie. "How long will it take us to get to Venice?"

"I don't know, but I am sure it will save you hours compared with going to London. I shall get the exact time for you in a moment."

Jennie followed the suggestion of the Princess, and together the two went to the ever-entrancing city of Venice. By the time they reached there, Jennie had her account written and coded. The long message was handed in at the telegraph office as soon as the two arrived in Venice. Jennie also sent the editor a private despatch giving her address in Venice, and also telling him the reason for sending the telegram from Italy rather than from Austria or Germany. In the evening she received a reply from Mr. Hardwick. "This is magnificent," the telegram said. "I doubt if anything like it has ever been done before. We will startle the world to-morrow morning. Please return to Vienna, for, as you have discovered this much, I am perfectly certain that you will be able to unearth the robbers. Of course all the police and all the papers of Europe will be on the same scent, but I am sure that you will prove a match for the whole combination."

"Oh, dear!" cried Jennie, as she handed the message to her friend. "What a bother-

some world this is; there is no finality about anything. One piece of work simply leads to another. Here I thought I had earned at least a good month's rest, but, instead of that, a further demand is made upon me. I am like the genii in fairy tales: no sooner is one apparently impossible task accomplished than another is set."

"But what a magnificent thing it would be if you could discover the robber or robbers."

"Magnificent enough, yes; but that isn't to be done by inviting a lot of old women to tea, is it?"

"No; but we shall have to set our wits together in another direction. I tell you, Jennie, I know I have influence enough to have you made a member of the special police. Shall I introduce you as from America, and say that you have made a speciality of solving mysteries? An appointment to the special police would allow you to have unrestricted entrance to the secret portion of the Treasury building. You would see the rooms damaged by the explosion, and you would learn what others have discovered. With that knowledge we might then do something towards solving the problem."

"Madame la Princesse," cried Jennie enthusiastically, "you are inspired! The very thing. Let us get back to Vienna." And accordingly the two conspirators left Italy by the night train for Austria.

