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The Prince

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CHAPTER I
Domestic Scene

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Charles Stuart-Dene, Marquess of Alverley, looked at humanity, and wondered why it was.

You conceive the pessimism prompting this spirit of philosophic inquiry. How far it was justified you may gather from the Memoirs of the Margravine of Bayreuth, a lady who was no more curbed by discretion in the glimpses she affords us of her family, and particularly of her abominable sire, than in other matters that are commonly accounted intimate.

Through the bright, prominent eyes that stared out of her young face, which would have been winsome had it not been pockmarked, you may view the scene that is to be regarded as the prelude to all this mischief. It was set in the Porcelain Gallery of the Palace of Monbijou.

Music was being made by the flute of the Crown Prince of Prussia, to an accompaniment by his sister Wilhelmina, the future Margravine, on the lute, and the young Rittmeister von Katte on the clavichord. The three were rendering a sugary composition which the Prince claimed for his own, but which Katte believed would never have been written but for the previous existence of a melody of Scarlatti’s.

Monbijou with all its choice contents had been a gift to Queen Sophia Dorothea from her father-in-law, Frederick, the first King in Prussia; and this spacious Porcelain Gallery, so called because of the immensely tall and valuable Chinese vases that were the most conspicuous objects in its

subdued and impeccable appointments, was one of the pleasantest of the palace’s chambers. Light and airy, its lofty windows commanded a view of the long gardens that stretched down to the tranquil river.

The audience on this afternoon of spring included the Queen herself, a corpulent, comfortable body in a waistless sacque of yellow brocade that lent her the appearance of a monstrous ninepin, whilst the two flame-coloured patches under her eyes gave her the face of a Nuremberg doll. In attendance upon her were the scarcely less portly Frau von Kamken, whom Wilhelmina elegantly nicknamed the Fat Cow, the equally bovine Frau von Bülow, the majestic and quite foolish Countess of Bollenberg, and, by way of contrast, the fair and delicate Fräulein von Sorensen, who was a miracle of willowy grace. Of the half-score courtiers who completed this intimate little gathering, the most notable were Count Hugo von Katzenstein, a tall, fair man approaching forty, of a serene, distinguished air and an almost French urbanity of manner, and Lieutenant von Ingersleben, a handsome lad in a guardsman’s uniform, who was one of the Prince’s most constant companions.

Lastly, and in a class apart, with them and yet perceptibly not of them, there was our young Lord Alverley, tall and spare and dark. Under a good brow his narrow countenance was of a melancholy in respose which the too-impressionable Margravine confesses that she found dangerously engaging. In his suit of black—the simulated mourning so commonly adopted from motives of economy by gentlemen of restricted means—he contrasted sombrely with Katte’s military blue and silver and the Prince’s French

splendour of whaleboned, silver-galooned pink satin coat over a lilac waistcoat. His Highness’s flamboyance, stressed by the exaggeratedly high red heels of his French shoes and the excessive curls of his pomaded and powdered yellow head, was, thought Alverley, better suited to his mincing airs than the guardsman’s uniform in which my lord had hitherto beheld him.

Short of stature and slight of build, the Prince, now in his eighteenth year, was hardly prepossessing of countenance. It was rendered, by the excessively long nose, making a single line with the flat brow, reminiscent of a weasel’s. The eyes, however, were unusually arresting: large, pale and prominent, they derived an uncanny brilliance from the fact that the whites were visible all round the iris. Alverley had heard it asserted somewhere at some time that the possessors of such eyes are to be avoided, and so much are we the victims of preconceptions that this may have been at the root of the mistrust and faint dislike with which at the very outset of their acquaintance the Prince had inspired him. Otherwise he might have read in those eyes the wistfulness of one who struggles with frustration, a wistfulness that could arouse in kindly souls a vague commiseration, and, through this, a measure even of devotion.

No resemblance was discernible between the Prince and the sister for whom he had an affection greater than any other woman was ever to command in him. From her small-featured, oval face, which had been comely enough before the smallpox marred it, her lively, darting eyes took a sprightly view of life. Her neat shape was in olive green, the

bodice laced to a deep point, the billowing over-skirt caught in folds towards the back and padded into what was called with German delicacy a cul-de-Paris.

She was seated beside von Katte, in order that she might follow the scored pages of music set up on the clavichord. If we are to believe her, it was not a propinquity she ordinarily sought, for she suggests small liking for the Rittmeister—although her father, as we shall see, was to take a very different view of her feelings—and she accepted his society only because of the deep affection borne him by her brother. She describes as baneful the glance of his eyes, of a deep blue under heavy black eyebrows that made a single line. He, too, was pockmarked, deeply so, very sallow, of a remarkable ugliness, but nevertheless a man of irresistible charm. In the middle twenties, he was talented and accomplished, a gay companion, a gifted musician, a painter of some merit and a soldier of great promise.

The sonata faded to a soft conclusion. Applause was led by the perfunctory clapping of the plump hands of Majesty.

“That was entrancing, Fritz. Entrancing.” And then, because it was not in her nature to neglect an opportunity for lamentation, she must add: “I could weep when I think how little your father appreciates your great gifts.”

The eagerness in which the Prince, ever avid of praise, had turned to receive her commendation, faded a little at this mention of his father. A sigh, a lift of the brows, and a shrug were his only answer, as he turned to Alverley.

His lordship conceived that the Prince invited comment, and politeness, at war with sincerity, prescribed that he supply it generously. He contrived an adroit compromise.

“Your highness aspires to say with Horace: ‘Non omnis moriar.’ ”

“Ah!” The Prince stirred uncomfortably, hesitated, and finally asked: “That means?”

“ ‘I shall not wholly die.’ Which is to say that my works will survive as an immortal part of me.”

The Prince smiled. “You are not by chance a flatterer, Monsieur le Marquis?” Then the smile twisted into a sneer. “What does not flatter me is that I should need to ask the meaning of your phrase. It shames me. But then the study of Latin has been denied me. My father holds the view that it’s for pedants only. Young men of quality, he tells me, are to cultivate valour rather than scholarliness.”

“Yet from Cæsar’s day history abounds in instances of men who have possessed both at once.”

“Morbleu! If you can persuade my father of that I’ll spare no pains to bring you to audience with him.”

The Freiherr von Katzenstein, who had sauntered across to them, ventured, smoothly urbane, into the conversation. “Do not take his Highness seriously, Marquis. He wants to laugh. You would be doing no service either to his Highness or yourself. Indeed you could find no surer way to prejudice his Majesty against you.”

They spoke in French, which, indeed, was the common language of the polite world throughout Germany, and commonest in Berlin where, as a result of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, one-third of the population was actually French. Those Huguenot refugees who had sought shelter in Brandenburg a half-century earlier had brought, in new

handicrafts and trades, their civilizing influence into the Electorate.

Prince Frederick's first governess, Madame de Roucoules, had been French, as had been his tutor Duhan, whom Frederick William had driven out with blows of his cane when he caught him teaching his son Latin. The Prince, with his airs and graces and affectations of culture, had come to hold the German language in such contempt, as fit only for soldiers and peasants, grooms and horses, that he was never to learn it thoroughly, never to speak it save with a foreign accent. He used it, as did other members of the family, only in the King's presence, when French was excluded by Frederick William's francophobia, just as in Frederick William's presence music and dancing and the other polite amenities which his Majesty despised were banished. Because of this the members of the royal family eagerly welcomed the King's hunting expeditions to Wusterhausen and other absences that temporarily delivered them from his despotic boorish restraint. To Frederick in particular was it a season of relief, in which without apprehensions he might deliver himself to music and exercise the considerable virtuosity so savagely execrated by his father.

He was beginning to express it unrestrainedly when the lovely Fräulein von Sorensen came to detach Alverley with word that her Majesty commanded his company.

Ever since Sophia Dorothea's father, the Elector of Hanover, had—as a consequence of the lack of vitality of Queen Anne's long succession of children—been called to the throne of England, she had accounted herself as in some

sort English. Considering that she was the daughter of one English king, the sister of another, and still with hopes that Wilhelmina would marry the Prince of Wales, and thus ultimately make her the mother-in-law of a third, it was the least of her extravagances that she should regard an Englishman as all but a compatriot. It was precisely upon this that the alert Katte had counted when first he had taken Alverley to Monbijou. It was his hope to engage her Majesty's interest for him, and he now observed with satisfaction that at last she gave attention to the Englishman.

She received him amiably. "I am pleased with Fritz that he should have brought you to visit me, Milord Alverley." Her fan waved him to a gilded chair beside the little sofa which she occupied, and all but filled. "Be seated, sir. I am curious to learn to what Berlin owes the advantage of your presence."

"Rather should your Majesty ask me to what I owe the advantage of being in Berlin."

"It had not occurred to me that that could be an advantage to anyone." Her plaintive tone suggested the reluctance with which she, herself, abode there. "Certainly not to one who has left the opulent world of London and the elegances of the Court of St. James. I cannot figure to myself why you should willingly exchange them for our heavy dullness."

The explanation her Majesty sought was not one that could be offered by a proscribed Jacobite to the sister of King George II, save at the risk of nipping the incipient buds

of favour. He sought safety in a half-truth, which is the most formidable, because the most convincing, of all lies.

“I have come to Berlin, Madame, in the hope of studying the military art in its foremost European academy.”

“Ah!” She sighed. All things seemed to supply her with matter for melancholy. “That is an answer that will no doubt please his Majesty.” The implication was that it did not please her.

Nevertheless, Katte, who had abandoned the clavichord to follow Alverley, took this for his cue. “My cousin hopes to deserve your Majesty’s gracious interest with the King, so that his ambition may be gratified.”

Overhearing him, the Prince swung towards them, with a short, disdainful laugh. “Ma foi! It’s, as my mother says, an ambition that will not fail to find favour with the King. The source of all my misfortunes is that such an ambition is not mine.”

“Indeed, Fritz, you were born for nobler things,” his sister flattered him.

“I hope so. Indeed, I hope so. Meanwhile I am constrained to meaner ones: to drills that are death to my soul; to a uniform that is a shroud to my body. And these things, Milord Alverley, are your choice, who enjoy the freedom that I envy. I have often thought that God is very unjust.”

This scandalized his mother. Her massive bosom quivered. She raised a plump, ring-laden hand. “Hush, Fritz! That is not a thing to say. You should not laugh, Rittmeister.”

“Truth is so often indecent,” said his Highness, primly sententious. “It goes naked, I believe.”

“Fie, Fritz!” She turned again to Alverley. “I shall be happy, if you think it will really profit you, to speak for you to his Majesty when he returns. You’ll have been told that at present he is at Wusterhausen. Hunting bears, or boars, or wolves, or something. That is his favourite pursuit when he is not hunting giants, or drilling them.” Plaintively she continued: “You’ll have seen his regiment of monster grenadiers, brought together from every country in Europe.”

“An imposing body of men, Madame.”

“Imposing? Say grotesque. An overgrown, knock-kneed lot. I hear of a recent arrival, over eight feet tall; a Hungarian, I believe, acquired at fantastic cost.” Again she sighed, almost lachrymose. “Half his Majesty’s revenues are squandered on the monsters. We cut down expenditure beyond the limits of dignity so as to waste money on these museum specimens. Oh, and then the trouble it makes with foreign princes, whose subjects they are! That and the reckless Prussian recruiting in foreign lands will end by landing us in a war with someone. But—alas!—it’s all of a piece with Prussian ways, as you’ll discover, sir. Believe me, it was not worth while to leave England for what you may find here.” She ceased waving her fan, and peered at him over the top of it.

His smile deepened the gentle sadness of his eyes. They were naturally sad and kindly, from their slightly downward slant, contrasting oddly with the rather bitter set of his lips. A thoughtful contemporary observed of him that whereas he owed the shape of his eyes to nature, it was experience that had modelled the lines of his mouth. In itself that is an indication of his history.

Smiling, he evaded the implied question in her words and glance. “On the contrary, Madame. Your Majesty’s graciousness alone makes it worth while.”

“I should be happy, I assure you, Milord, if I could extend it further. You would, I am sure, be better advised to seek the interest of Baron von Grumbkow. His influence with the King is paramount. Don’t you agree, Rittmeister?”

“There is no question, Madame, of Monsieur de Grumbkow’s influence with his Majesty; but some question of our influence with Monsieur de Grumbkow.”

The Prince flung in a sneer. “There is no question of either. The only question is one of price. There is nothing his Excellency will not do for money. Fortunately you English are rich. Grumbkow’s interest may be had by any who can pay for it.”

The stricture raised a general laugh among those intimates who were within earshot. Only the Queen offered a half-hearted protest, possibly from dread lest the words be reported to the powerful minister.

“Do not always be so malicious, Fritz.”

“There is no malice in truth, mama.”

The Princess supported him, as she would in any argument. “And it’s a deal less than justice. All the world knows Grumbkow for a crafty, grasping, insinuating rascal.”

“The sort of man, in short, to whom my father would naturally give his confidence.”

Again the Queen displayed distress, not, however, from any regard for Grumbkow or disagreement with what was said of him. Indeed, she had every cause to detest the Baron, for she believed him to be subsidized by Austria, and

hostile, consequently, to her hopes of matrimonial alliances with England. Her heart was set not only upon marrying Wilhelmina to the Prince of Wales, but also upon marrying Frederick to the English Princess Amelia.

“It is not nice, Fritz, to speak so of your father.”

“God knows, mama, it is not nice to speak of him at all.” Fritz sauntered off to the clavichord again, and took up a sheet of music. “Here is a dance I have composed: in the manner of the Magyar czardas. Will you try it with me, Katte, and you, Wilhelmina?”

Katte laughed. “A change of subject is perhaps prudent.”

“And always a pleasure,” said filial piety, “when papa is the subject.”

“Oh, Fritzchen! Fritzchen!” His mother’s lips dutifully condemned what her heart approved.

They fell to their musical task. The piece possessed at least the merit of faithfully reproducing the pulse-quickening Hungarian rhythm, and it was swelling to its climax when the main door of the gallery was suddenly and violently flung open.

Instantly Katte rose from the clavichord and the Princess from her seat beside him, whilst the Prince, with the flute still at his lips, swung round to seek the cause of the interruption in an irritation that at once gave place to dismay. The last note of the flute degenerated into a squeak.

Framed in the doorway stood a man whose girth was equal to his height, and he was by no means short. His blue uniform coat with red facings and copper buttons was tightly strained about his swollen bulk, above which his little

head, with its small flat wig, was dwarfed by contrast to a mere knob. His mouth was too small, his nose too short for the breadth of his countenance, now suffused by a purple flush. His little eyes malevolently took in the scene.

“What is doing here?” he trumpeted in German, striking the ground with his cane.

Upon the entire company, now on its feet, a hush had fallen at this sight of a King whom all had supposed safely distant at Wusterhausen. To his question the only answer was a gasp of dismay from the Queen.

Frederick William came forward a step or two, grasping his cane as if it were a sword. His terrible glance raked the courtier group and came at last to settle upon the Prince. Suddenly, explosively, he addressed him. “Almighty! Why are you not in uniform? Why are you dressed like a French Harlequin? Is this what you do when my back is turned, you rascal?” He swung to the quaking Queen, the veins swelling on his brow. “And you, Madam? Do you abet this fribble in his defiance of me?” He advanced again. “I will not tolerate it. Righteous Lord God! Your son was born to be a king—not a womanish fop, a squeaking flute-player. Don’t you realize it?”

The Prince, white and trembling, began a soothing appeal. “Lieber papa ...”

“Silence, puppy! You need schooling. You are to be taught that my wishes are to be respected in my absence as in my presence.”

The Queen, at the point of tears, dolefully interposed. “But it is such a little thing, such a ...”

“A little thing! To be sure. That is all this good-for-nothing will ever do. Little things. Vicious little things. Grosser Gott! He’s my son, heir to a throne, and without a single manly trait. I suppose he is my son, Madam. God knows he gives me cause to doubt it.”

This precipitated the flow of the Queen’s impending tears, with havoc to her raddled cheeks. Wilhelmina and Fräulein von Sorensen drew closer to her as if protectively.

The vertical line between Alverley’s brows had deepened. Standing stiffly now at Katte’s side beyond the clavichord, he looked in incredulous horror upon this spectacle of unreasoning rage. The remainder of the company was ranged in a motionless, uncomfortable silence.

The King rolled forward on his swollen legs. Violently he snatched the instrument from the limp hands of the cowering Prince. “Have I not told you often enough that I will not have you waste your time piping like a silly shepherd? Let this make you more mindful of my orders.” Brutally he struck the youth’s unguarded face with the flute. “A flute! My God! I have a flute-player for a son. Prussia has a flute-player for its Crown Prince. Du lieber Gott!” Again he struck the Prince, this time across the head, and then flung the abominated instrument through the open window.

Next he took his son, who had covered his bruised and bleeding face with his hands, by the collar of his fine satin coat. “Who gave you leave to dress yourself in this fashion? Pah! You disgusting, mincing fop! Pink satin! My God! And you stink of civet like a harlot, yet your neck is dirty. You don’t even wash. You’re an offensive spectacle.”

He wrenched at the coat, as if to tear it off, grimacing viciously at the effort. Failing in his purpose, he loosed his hold and raised his cane. But whilst the Prince bounded, shaking, out of reach, his mother and sister, both clamant and in tears, hung each upon one of the royal arms, whilst Katzenstein, serenely calm, moved aside so as to place himself as a screen between father and son. His Majesty was striving in vain to shake himself free of the women, trumpeting the while, when Katte plucked Alverley's sleeve.

Under cover of the royal bellowing he murmured: "The scene becomes a thought too domestic. I fear we intrude."

There was a side door near the clavichord, and by this they slipped quietly from the gallery.

CHAPTER II
The Fortunes of Alverley

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“It is not given to every man to enjoy the spectacle of a royal family in curl-papers.”

Thus Katte irreverently, as the cousins took their way on foot through the park of Monbijou.

“Enjoyment,” drawled Alverley, “was not what I experienced. Unbridled rage is rather matter for disgust, inconceivable in a man of birth.”

Alverley merely expressed an article of the code by which he lived. He belonged to an amiably artificial age, schooled in restraint, in superficial courtesies and in the masking of emotions, accounting imperturbability the outward sign of breeding. Reared in such an atmosphere, chiefly prevalent in England and in France, Alverley had been fortified in a disposition to which his nature—perhaps by inheritance—was already prone. His complete self-mastery was apparent in his air, his movements, and, above all, in his speech, which never rose above a quiet level however vigorous the expressions he might employ. To Prince Frederick, to whom a demeanour of such urbane calm was as novel as it was attractive, this was amongst the most prepossessing of the attributes he discovered in Lord Alverley.

Saluted by the sentry at the wrought-iron gates of the park, the cousins crossed the bridge over one of the lesser arms of the Spree, and emerged into the town.

The month was June, and the warmth of the weather was rendering the flat capital of Brandenburg, watered by a sluggish river, perhaps the most evil-smelling city in a Europe in which no city could be said to delight the nostrils. The only merit of its ill-paved streets lay in their unusual width, just as the houses, mostly of brick, were unusually low. For the arid land was of such poor value that there was no thought for economy of space, and buildings might sprawl at little cost.

Because the acreage of the city was small for its population, the liveliness of its thoroughfares was considerable, and in the Burgstrasse, at this late hour of the afternoon, there was a steady flow of coaches and sedan-chairs to and from the direction of the Schloss, and a steadier flow of wayfarers of every class afoot. There was a ubiquity of uniforms, from those of glittering officers, sauntering with their ladies under the lime trees that shaded the avenue along the river, to those of gaitered infantrymen moving with the stiff precision of automata. By the bridge that crossed to the island where the best of the city was built, the cousins were obliged to range themselves aside, so as to give passage to a jingling troop of green-coated hussars on its way from the Zeughaus. From somewhere across the river came a bugle-call, and the air was vibrant with a distant roll of drums.

“Berlin, you see,” said Katte, “is just a military camp, of which his Majesty is the drill-sergeant, with a drill-sergeant’s manners. So if you are to persevere in your intentions here you’ll need a less delicate stomach.”

“After to-day, will it serve any purpose to persevere?”

“But why not?”

“We hardly care for those who have seen us at a disadvantage. After what I’ve witnessed, the King will not be likely to show me favour.”

Katte was amused. “You have yet to know his Majesty. He certainly does not suspect that he has been seen at a disadvantage. That was his normal conduct. For the rest, I don’t suppose that he will even remember you. Or that he even saw you. Or indeed, that he saw anything but Fritz’s coat and Fritz’s flute. Poor Fritz! Perhaps you begin to understand my attachment to him.”

“Less than ever. I discern in him little to inspire it.”

“Surely much, at least, to inspire pity. Abused, distracted, humiliated, thwarted in every aspiration by his outrageous father.”

“What are his aspirations, beyond those prompted by his vanity and his malice?”

“There is better than that in him. But it is repressed by his abominable circumstances. He is not the fool he seems; he is hungry for knowledge, and hungry for affection; a starved soul. There you have the source of his appeal to me. Take a kindlier view of him, Charles. I know him disposed to be your friend, and that he would help you if he could, not only for my sake, but for your own. However, for the present I don’t think we can reckon upon him. We will take the Queen’s advice, and pay our court to Baron von Grumbkow.”

“But if this Baron requires to be bought? Or is that merely little Fritz’s malice?”

“Oh, no. It’s true enough that his Excellency neglects no chance of making money. It is even whispered that he is in

the pay of Austria. But for all that he is not incapable of a disinterested action, and he owes some favours to my grandfather and yours, the old Marshal. So we'll try him."

"As you please, my dear Hans. But you'll remember that I am in no case to bribe anyone above the rank of a lackey."

You may account this an odd statement if you remember that the Manor of Dene, of which the Stuart-Denes had been lords for a century before they were raised to the rank of marquesses, is amongst the wealthiest in England. Nevertheless it is a fact that Charles Stuart-Dene was tramping the world with empty pockets.

To find the cause we must go back to the year 1700, when Henry Stuart-Dene, second Marquess of Alverley, was making the grand tour.

His lordship came in the course of his travels to the court of the Elector of Brandenburg, and there met, wooed and married Fräulein Caroline von Katte, daughter of the Marshal of Wartensleben and lady-in-waiting to the Electress. Of this marriage Charles was born at Dene two years later, and there might have lived out his life without adventure had not his father accounted his loyalty due to the dynasty from which his house derived its broad acres (bestowed by James I) and with which it claimed kinship. As a result he had lost his life in the rising of 1715.

The confiscation of his lands and the extinction of his titles were avoided only because Caroline had become persona gratissima with the Princess of Wales, Caroline of Anspach. The full penalty was avoided by payment of a crippling fine, which, if it left the House of Alverley still standing, left it sadly in disrepair. It became necessary for

Charles to seek to rebuild its fortunes, and since he chose to regard service to the House of Hanover as an outrage upon his father’s memory, it only remained for him to seek that fortune abroad.

Reluctantly yielding to his wishes, his mother exerted such influence as she possessed in her native land, with such good results that at the early age of eighteen Charles left Oxford in order to take service under that great master of war, Prince Eugène, who at the time was Governor of the Netherlands. It was a service destined to last little more than a year; for the fortune which he was seeking to build abroad his mother conceived that she had found ready-built for him at home. So that when in 1724 Prince Eugène gave up the government of the Netherlands to become the Imperial Vicar-General of Italy, Charles, perceiving no prospect of campaigning, in which alone was rapid advancement to be won, yielded to his mother’s prayers and returned to Dene.

Caroline’s native shrewdness had discovered how to turn a title into a marketable commodity so as to obtain the means to deliver the house of Alverley from its crippling mortgages and restore it to its former splendours. Her diligent quest had ended in the discovery of Edward Gatling, an opulent nabob newly returned from the East Indies, enriched, more or less dishonestly no doubt, and greedy of honours to adorn his millions. Gatling possessed two daughters. Caroline would have preferred that there had been only one. His fortune, however, was adequate to provide each of his girls with a dowry to dazzle any

impecunious nobleman, and the girls happened to be comely enough to command devotion on their own account.

Had it been otherwise Caroline's secret scheme would hardly have succeeded quite so easily. As it was, Charles, at the impressionable age of twenty-two, fell in love with Marion Gatling, the nabob's elder daughter. She was two years his senior, and although her affections were already pledged elsewhere, she was sufficiently her opportunist father's daughter to set the advantages of exalted rank above sentimental considerations. Not in her most extravagant day-dreams had she seen herself a marchioness, with the high position at court assured her by the circumstance that her husband's mother was the intimate friend of the future Queen.

Her father's millions disencumbered for the bridal couple the debt-ridden Manors of Dene and Revelstone, and Charles, restored by his marriage to all that his father's politics had lost him, looked forward to a future of ease and dignity and happiness.

It happened, however, that Marion's winsome exterior cloaked a nature fundamentally base. Nobility, after all, is not acquired from one generation to another. It is the result of a more gradual refining process. In her case too, the sentimental attachment which she had so cynically stifled in order to become the Marchioness of Alverley may have played its part in the unhappy sequel.

A misogynist has said—and the adoring Charles was all too soon to realize it in bitterness—that behind the woman you marry there is another who does not disclose herself until the season of rapture has begun to fade. Under

provocation, and the nabob’s daughter, spoilt darling, was easily provoked, her mincing speech gave place to the strident railings of the shrew. Mistaking for weakness the restraint which Charles’s breeding imposed upon him in the face of her liberal contumely, her authoritarian manner towards him became ever more insufferable as time passed, until disillusion was followed in him by distaste, and the love he had brought to the union was turned to loathing for a termagant who embittered all his days.

Meanwhile, as by an irony, the early rapture was bearing fruit. A son was born to them within a year of the wedding. Vain and short-lived was Charles’s hope that motherhood would engender gentler moods, to make life possible at least. Instead, matters became worse, and at last she did not even shrink in her tantrums from informing him that the rank and station which he supposed he had bestowed upon her by marriage were hers by right of purchase.

It is possible that this taunt may have been responsible for much that followed. Already the evil conditions of his home were driving him to seek distractions abroad. Loyalty to the beloved memory of his father rendered him sympathetic to the Stuart cause, notwithstanding the consideration which his mother had procured from the House of Hanover. Thus he was fertile soil for the temptations that came his way after the death of George I in 1727, and almost lightheartedly he allowed himself to be swept into one of those plots that were ever simmering for the overthrow of the Hanoverian dynasty.

He may have been foolishly incautious, or it may have been far from his imaginings that in spite of their ill relations

his wile could be guilty of betraying him. Nor perhaps would she have done so but for her affright when her ever hostile vigilance discovered his treasonable traffic. She reasoned, I suppose, that if the Alverley estates had all but been escheated when they were his father's, it was certainly not for her to suffer them to be escheated now when she regarded them as her own purchased property and her son's heritage. There was one sure way of avoiding it, and that way she took without warning or compunction. She sought Sir Robert Walpole, and, huckstering daughter of a huckstering sire, she sold him, in return for guarantees that the Manors of Dene and Revelstone should remain immune from escheatment, the information that should enable him to crush the incipient conspiracy. Whether considerations of that earlier attachment of hers, and a hope not merely of security but of widowhood, played any part in this we do not know. But if they did, she was disappointed of at least this portion of the reward. For it happened that a wise government desired no Stuart martyrs, whose blood might prove a seed of further treasons. Perhaps had it been otherwise, Sir Robert might not so easily have accepted the bargain that she offered. A warning was secretly conveyed to Charles, as to other leading members of the plot, that only by instant flight could he hope to save his head.

Thus it was that he came to tread the cheerless path of exile in which we discover him.

With only exiguous and rapidly shrinking resources, and with nothing but his sword to offer in the world's market, he had first sought employment at the court of the Pretender in whose cause he had ruined himself. But the Pretender's own

manifestly straitened circumstances afforded him no hopes, and so in the end he had come to seek opportunity under the ægis of his mother's family in the notorious militarism of the new kingdom of Prussia.

Frederick William was known to be building up an army so ludicrously out of proportion to the two and a half million subjects that inhabited his scattered territories that it might reasonably be said—and was being said—that Prussia existed only to maintain this army. To achieve his ambition the King shrank from no sacrifice and from no measures, licit or illicit. His recruiting officials were sedulously at work in every state of the Empire, and even beyond it, to the constant indignation and frequent protests of neighbouring princes, especially when this recruiting went the lengths of kidnapping, as not infrequently happened.

Frederick William's vain and pretentious father, the Elector of Brandenburg, had looked on with jealous eyes when his neighbour the Elector of Hanover had become King of England and his other neighbour, the Elector of Saxony, had been elected King of Poland. Accounting himself at least as good as either of them, he knew no rest until he had succeeded in pestering the Emperor into a bargain, whereunder, in exchange for the royal dignity, the Brandenburger relinquished certain vague claims to some lands in Silesia.

To accomplish this, and against the advice of Prince Eugène, who with remarkable vision foresaw trouble for the world from such a stimulation of Hohenzollern ambition, the Emperor raised into a Kingdom the remote, diminutive, barbarous province of East Prussia, formerly under Polish

suzerainty, and bestowed the crown of it upon the Elector Frederick. So that whilst still no more than a Margrave in Brandenburg, he now became a King in Prussia. In order to give weight and substance to his new title, he brought his subjects in Brandenburg and in the other odd scraps of land which he owned here and there between the Rhine and the Vistula, gradually to be described as Prussians. It was much as if the Elector of Hanover upon becoming King of England had insisted that his Hanoverian subjects be described as Englishmen.

Like any other parvenu the new king considered it necessary to impress his neighbours. So he yielded a free rein to ostentation, spent upon his coronation the outrageous sum of six million thalers, and set himself to ape the splendours of the King of France, who continued contemptuously to refer to him still as the Marquis of Brandenburg. He created a swarm of court officials, loaded himself with jewels, ate to a fanfare of trumpets, held levées in the French manner, and went processionally to bed. Having become a king it was necessary to be royal. Thus, in a parody of the Sun-King, he wasted the substance grimly wrung from the sweat and labour of his scanty subjects.

It was far otherwise with his coarser successor, Frederick William. Instead of inviting ridicule by an emulation of the prodigality of the French court, he swung to the other extreme, and by a Spartan effacement of all splendours, sought to advertise his contempt for the pomps of Versailles. He sold the jewels on which his father had laid out a fortune, swept away the elaborate retinues and idle costly offices, and reduced even his table expenditure to a

bourgeois level of which he kept strict account. But the parvenu’s need for self-assertion remained; and if he abolished the ostentation for which his rude nature had no taste and the refinements of which he had no understanding, he scraped and saved and ground his subjects in order to build up a mighty army. Thus he strove to the pompous end that his ramshackle kingdom, frontierless, and of scattered provinces that had come to the Hohenzollerns gradually by marriage or inheritance, should be reckoned amongst the great powers of Europe.

In such a kingdom it seemed to Alverley that employment might be found for one who, at least, should not lack for sponsors in his mother’s high-placed kin. So he had sought his mother’s father, the old Marshal von Katte of Wartensleben, and by the House of Katte he had been warmly welcomed. Not only did the ties of blood lend him interest in the eyes of his mother’s people, but his title, literally translated, made him Markgraf von Alverley to them; and in Germany a Margrave’s was a sovereign rank, the equal of that of their own sovereign in Brandenburg. However straitened might be their kinsman’s circumstances, his Brandenburger cousins felt that the family gathered lustre from his presence.

From Wartensleben he had brought letters for King Frederick William, in which the old Marshal recommended his hoch-und-wohlgeboren grandson to his Majesty’s favour, and in Berlin, whilst awaiting the return of the King from his bear-hunting at Wusterhausen, Katte had presented his English cousin to the Crown Prince, and had taken him to