

From an Old Miscellany
The Bronze Statue

Count Lieuwen, a favorite officer in the service of the deceased king of Prussia, had under his special patronage and tuition, a young engineer of high rank, whose advancement to his notice had been solely due to his merits. His battalion, led by the Austrian Gen. Clairfait, then on his march through the Low Countries towards France, was ordered to surprise a small village on the frontiers in the enemy's possession. In the middle of the night, young Ewald entered his commander's tent, and informed him that a negotiation had been begun by the chief magistrate of this district to admit the Prussian soldiers into an ambuscade, by which they might surround the French stationed in the village of Alheim, and put them to the sword. "Sir," he added, "I am acquainted with a path through the thickets that skirts the Church-yard, and by leading fifty chosen men through it, we may enclose the farm and out-houses in which these Frenchmen lodge, and force them to surrender, without the baseness of entering their hosts gates in groups disguised as travelers, and massacring them in their sleep. This vile provost has made the offer in hopes of reward, for which he conditions privately, heedless of the bloodshed and ravage which our soldiery would spread among the poor villagers in the blindness of their fury." "You are right," replied the count—"and it would be well to gain this advantageous post, without disgrace to our characters as Prussian soldiers, or outrage to the unoffending native. Through whose means did this honorable offer come? For I suspect the communicant is willing to share the reward?" The young engineer cast down his eyes, and answered, after a short and graceful hesitation, "He is my enemy, my lord—forgive me if I do not name him."

Count Lieuwen's brow grew smooth.—"Well, Lichtenstein," he said, with a tone of familiarity he seldom used, except where his heart was touched, "well—there will be no surer way, I see, to secure both our military credit, and this poor village from plunder, than to give you the command of the affair. Choose your comrades and conduct them. But how is it that you know the avenue of this obscure place so well?"

Ewald was silent for a few moments only, because he was conscious of feelings likely to make his voice less firm. When he had stifled them, he replied, "to you who know my humble birth, and have remedied it so kindly by your patronage, I need not be afraid to confess this village was my birth place, and that farm which the provost intends to deliver up tonight for the purpose of massacre and riot is—or was—" He could not add his meaning, but count Lieuwen felt it. Brushing a tear from his eyes, the older soldier bade him take his detachment, and obtain possession of the place in the manner he deemed fittest. Ewald departed instantly, and returned in the morning to announce his complete success, without the escape of a single Frenchman. He brought besides, a valuable dispatch, which his advanced guard had intercepted; and the count delighted with the important result of the affair, and with the generous spirit it had exhibited, offered his young lieutenant a thousand crowns, the sum for which the treacherous provost had negotiated, gallantly saying his sovereign would more willingly pay it as the recompense of a hazardous and well performed duty, than as the premium of a traitor. "If," said the lieutenant, modestly, "your lordship thinks this village worth a thousand crowns to his majesty, I pray you to consider them due to my senior officer, Dorffen: Your personal kindness induced you to waive his right, and to give me the command of last night's affair: yet it is just that he should have the

price of what he deserved to win.” “He shall have it,” answered Lieuwen, compressing his lips sternly—“but now I know who would have bought what you have won honestly.”

The first care of this brave veteran on his return to Berlin, was to lay the circumstances of this fact before the king; the consequence was Ewald’s promotion; and before the war ceased, he rose to rank even higher than Count Lieuwen: and the last favor his old commander asked court was, that his adopted son might be appointed his successor in the fortress of Plauen, which his age rendered him averse to govern longer. This high distinction was granted; and the king, to suit the new governor’s title to his important office, added the rank of Baron to the Cross of the Black Eagle, already worn by Ewald de Lichtenstein. These unexpected honors did not alter the temper of the young hero—still preserving the bland urbanity of Marshal Turenne, whose elevation he had limited so successfully; he was proud to hear his comrades hint that he too was a miller’s son, and always strove to remind them how much he resembled his noble predecessor in benevolence and grace. But when he had offered his grateful obeisance, he solicited permission to absent himself one month before he assumed his new duties. Count Lieuwen’s friendship, and the peaceable state of the country, made the royal assent easy, and Ewald de Lichtenstein left Berlin to dedicate this short interval to his private happiness.

But Ewald, with all the splendor of his professional success, had not altered the humility of that private happiness. He had no hope so dear as to return to the village of Altheim, which ten years before, he had preserved from destruction; and to reclaim the farmer’s daughter with whom the first affections of his boyhood had been exchanged. During the various and busy vicissitudes of a soldier’s life, no correspondence had been possible, and he had time to snatch only a short interview when he entered the village with a hostile detachment. He took with him one attendant, a soldier of his own regiment, but unacquainted with his birth place, though sufficiently attached to his person to insure the secrecy he required—not from mean fear of exposing his humble origin, but from a generous wish to avoid displaying his new and self-acquired greatness. The journey was tedious to his fancy, though he travelled rapidly, for the pleasantest dreams of his youth were ready to be realized. His servant had orders to make no mention of his name or rank when he arrived at his place of destination, and the little village of Altheim came in sight in all the beauty of a summer evening, and a happy man’s imagination. As he entered it, however, he perceived that several cottages were in ruins, and the house where Josephine had lived was half unroofed, and its garden full of grass. Ewald’s heart misgave him, and his servant went on to enquire who occupied it. Schwartz brought his master intelligence that the niece of the former occupier had married a farmer, whose speculations had ended in inn-keeping with but little success. There was no other inn; and if there had been one, Ewald, notwithstanding his heart-burnings, would have chosen this. He renewed his cautions to his servant, and entered the miserable house, where the master sat surlily smoking his pipe in a kitchen with broken windows, and hearth almost cold. To his courteous request for accommodation, this man, whose suitable name was Wolfenbach, hardly returned an answer, except throwing him the remnant of a chair, and calling loudly at the door for his wife. A woman, in wretched apparel, bending under a load of sticks, crept from a ruined out-house, and came fearfully towards him. “Bring a faggot, drone, and cook some fish,” said her ruffian husband: “where is the bread I brought this morning, and the pitcher of milk?” “There was but little milk,” she answered, trembling, “and I gave it to our child.” “Brute, idiot!” he muttered with a hideous oath, and pushed her forward by a blow which Ewald’s heart felt. That moment would have discovered him, if the inn-keeper had not left

the house to attend his servant; and Ewald, as he looked again on Josephine's face, had courage enough to restrain a confession which would have aggravated her misery. Perhaps she had been left desolate — perhaps her husband had been made brutal by misfortune; at all events, he had no right to blame a marriage which circumstances had not permitted him to prevent. She might have had no alternative between it and disgrace, or Wolfenbach might have possessed, and seemed to deserve her choice better than himself. This last thought held him silent, as he sat with his face shaded near the fire. Josephine took but one glance at him, and another at the cradle, where a half-starved infant lay, before she begun her humble labors to prepare a supper. Ewald attempted to say something, but his voice, hoarse with emotion, appeared unknown to her, and she turned away with a look of repressed pride and shame. Yet as she could not but observe the earnest gaze of the stranger, her cheek flushed with conscious recollection, recovered some part of its former beauty, and Ewald had taken the infant on his knee, when Wolfenbach returned. His guest overcame the horror which almost impelled him to throw from him the offspring of a ruffian so debased, intending to convey into its cradle some aid for the unhappy mother, which might suffice to comfort her wants without betraying the giver. He hid a purse of gold within its wrapper, and gave it back to Josephine; while the father, murmuring at such pests, rebuked her slow cookery. But Ewald could not eat; and tasting a flask to propitiate the brutal landlord, withdrew to the bed meant for him, and was seen no more.

Late on the following morning, two men, as they passed near a spoiled hayrack, perceived motion in it, and heard a feeble noise. They took courage to remove some part, and, led on by traces of blood, examined till they found a body, yet warm with life, but wounded in a ghastly manner. They conveyed it to the village surgeon, and collected help to surround the house of Wolfenbach, whom they remembered to have seen on the road, mounted on a horse which had been observed the day before entering Altheim with the wounded man and another stranger. Skill and care restored this unfortunate stranger sufficiently to make his deposition. He named his master, and stated that the gloomy looks and eager questions of the inn-keeper had alarmed him on the night of Ewald's arrival, especially when he was desired to sleep in a ruined out-house. He had left it, and applying his ear to a crevice in the house door, heard Wolfenbach menacing his wife with death if she betrayed his search into the traveler's portmanteau, which had been left below; for probably, in the heedlessness of anguish, Ewald had not thought of attending to it. He also heard Josephine's timid expostulations, and the shriek of her child in its father's savage grasp, held perhaps as a hostage for her silence. He went to warn his master, and by calling through the casement of the loft where he lay awake, drew him from his bed. The stroke of an axe felled him to the ground, and he remembered nothing more. The fate of Ewald might be easily surmised. Detachments of peasants traversed the country round to gain intelligence of him, but without success, and, without knowing his claims on them as their countryman, they were all eager in their zeal to trace a man of rank and honor. Couriers met them from Berlin, dispatched to hasten his return; but after six months spent in earnest search, even his parental friend, Count Lieuwen, despaired of seeing him more, and believed him the victim of a ferocious robber. Wolfenbach had been seized with the horses of Ewald and his servant, which he had taken to sell at the nearest fair, and could not attempt even a plausible account of them. His miserable wife was in a state of delirium, which unfitted her to give coherent evidence; but the subject of her ravings, the purse of gold found in her infant's cradle, and a ring dropped near the traveler's bed, were powerful presumptive proofs against her husband. The rifled portmanteau was also discovered in a well, and the axe, stained with blood. Wolfenbach maintained an obstinate and

contumacious silence, during a long trial, which ended in a sentence of death, received with acclamations by the populace. He was carried to the scaffold, attended by no friend, and died without confession.

Count Lieuwen resumed the government of the fortress he had resigned, but not till he had made repeated inquiries, and offered large rewards for any trace of his lost favorite without effect. And when, after some years had passed, a public duty compelled him to visit the country in which Ewald had perished, he travelled hastily, and loathed the necessity which forced his equipage to rest at Alheim for a few hours. During the short stay, the master of the new inn found means to introduce himself, and beg his guest's attention to a rare curiosity which he possessed. Finding, from his valet's account, that this exhibition was a tax imposed on every traveler, the Count assented, and listened patiently to his host's history of a bronze statue, found in a peat bog, at a short distance, and from thence brought to his house. He went into the room where it was deposited, prepared to see some antique relic or cunning counterfeit but he saw, with feelings that need not be told, the body of his beloved Ewald in the travelling habit he had seen him wear, petrified by the power of the morass to the resemblance of a bronze statue. He stood a few moments aghast with astonishment and horror, not unmingled with gladness at this testimony of the truth preserved by a special operation of nature; for on the forehead, and in the neck of the seeming statue, two deep seams rendered the fact of Ewald's violent death unquestionable. But he had presence of mind enough to suppress his agitation, and affecting to believe the inn-keeper exhibited, as he supposed himself, a strange piece of ancient sculpture, gave him a much larger sum than had been expected, even from a nobleman of his own munificence, and carried off the prize. But he caused it to be conveyed to Berlin without noise, and made it no subject of conversation among his attendants.

Count Lieuwen's return to the metropolis was always followed by banquets given to his friends, and on this occasion he celebrated his arrival among them by inviting the chief nobility, and all the military officers who had shared and survived his campaigns. After supper, before any had departed, he spoke of a rare specimen of sculpture which he had reserved for their last regale. "You, all know," said he, "my tender affection for Ewald de Lichstenstein, my regret for his untimely loss, and wishing to preserve his memory, I think you will agree with me to erect a monument, if we could decorate it with a representation of him, suitable to his merits and his fate. But though we all know his merits, where shall we find an artist able to give a symbol of his death, since we know neither the time nor circumstance?"

The Count cast his eyes round the table as he spoke, and met approving and earnest looks from all his companions, except one, whose head was averted.—"But," he added, rising after a short pause, "I think I have found a statue sufficient itself for his monument."

A curtain drawn aside discovered the bronze statue of Ewald, lying on a bier composed of black turf. A silence and awe was followed by acclamations of wonder at the exquisite symmetry of the figure, and at the expression of the countenance, so nearly resembling its usual character, except in the half closed eyes and lids, parted as in the pangs of death. Some gathered round to observe the accurate folds of the drapery, and recognize every part of his travelling apparel. "There is even the shape of the seal ring he wore upon his finger," said one of the spectators,

“and here is the ribbon he received the day before he departed, from the king—but where is the Cross of the black Eagle?”

“In his grave,” replied Count Lieuwen, fixing his eyes on a guest who had never spoken. That guest was Dorffen, the senior officer superseded by Ewald. He suddenly lifted his head and answered—“*It is not!*” The terrible sound of his voice, the decision of his words, made the assembly fall back from him, leaving him alone standing opposite the corpse. His features wrought a few instants in convulsions, and his lips moved in unconscious mutterings. “Then (said a voice from among the group) the murderer robbed him of the Cross?”

“No, no—I robbed him of nothing—he robbed me of my place and honor, and of that cross which I might have earned at Alheim. We met alone—we were man to man; it was night, but I won the cross fairly, and now let him take it back.”

The self accused murderer made a desperate effort to throw it from his breast, and fell with his whole weight, and a laugh of madness, at the foot of the bier. The crowd raised him, but he spoke no more. His last words were truth, as subsequent enquiry proved. Accident or a hope of vengeance had led him to the neighborhood of Ewald’s village; they had met on the road, and fatal opportunity completed Dorffen’s guilt. He was buried under the scaffold, and the Bronze Statue remained a monument of Ewald’s fate and of retributive justice.

The Casket, February 1827