

Freiheit, die ich meine

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"entry into Society" had not been exactly a success. — But worse was to come.

Dinner was now announced, and full of pleasant anticipation, everybody filed into the dining room, where a beautifully laid table delighted the eye. The dinner was excellent, with one exception; one of the vegetables dished up, consisted of little carrots. Now I simply loathed carrots. I was told at home that this special dish was a very healthy one, as carrots purified the blood, and also made the hair curl; yet I considered that my blood was quite healthy enough, and I had not the faintest wish to be adorned with curls, as a matter of fact, I hated boys with curls. However, bearing in mind the good counsel I had received, I attacked with a stout heart these to me disagreeable objects, but it was no good, I simply could not swallow them, they made me feel sick, and yet it would have been rude and impolite to leave them on the plate.

Suddenly an inspiration crossed my mind, what about making them disappear somehow? I awaited an opportune moment, when the attention of my table neighbours were diverted, and quickly made them disappear into my handkerchief, which I had previously brought into the vicinity of my plate. The trick proved to be successful, not a soul noticed my clever manœuvre. — After the dinner all and sundry adjourned again into the Drawing Room, and it was proposed that a game of blind man's buff should be played. I was chosen to start it, and innocently, quite having forgotten what secrets my handkerchief harboured, snatched it out of the depths of my pocket, with the distressing result, that a shower of carrots descended on the expectant onlookers, one nearly hitting my distinguished hostess in the eye.

There was great consternation, I secretly prayed that the earth would open and swallow me up, but as earthquakes cannot be ordered at convenience, I had to face the ordeal and give some explanation. Luckily I hit one which was, the least said, plausible. I at once declared, that it was rather a mean trick of the conjuring Gentleman, to let those carrots disappear into my pockets, and on the whole, this statement went down quite well, in fact, some members of the company congratulated my friend on his clever performance. Not so my family, they, of course, knew of my aversion to this special dish, and black looks were cast in my direction, with the consequence that for the rest of the evening I kept rather quiet and subdued.

Luckily enough, soon after this for me most trying incident, the gathering dispersed. The home journey, was a quiet one, but this uncanny silence preyed on my mind, was this, I thought, what is known as the "silence before the storm." — It was. — The storm broke out in all its fury, on arriving home. I was told, that I did not only disgrace myself, but the whole family, that I was not fit to be let loose amongst decent people, that the company of Hottentots, Bushmen, and any other savage tribe, would be more in my line. I vainly protested, no excuse was accepted. Oh, how I hated *Society* that night, on laying a weary heart to rest; and during a sleepless night I made my mind up to keep aloof from it, as long as I would live, it was certainly no place for me.

The next morning I was ordered to personally tender my apologies to our host and hostess for my disgraceful behaviour. With some trepidation, and a ready made speech, I arrived at the door, where I

casually noticed, that I had the previous evening been pressing the door knob, instead of the bell, which explained, why I could not get a hearing. I was shown into the Drawing-Room, which quarters evoked in me some mixed feelings, and I was just going to look around whether there were any more carrots to be found, when the door opened, and my host and hostess entered. Before I could utter a word, they shook hands with me, tapped me on the back, at least my host did, and told me that I was the success of the evening, and that they haven't had for a long time, such a good laugh. I could hardly believe my ears, after all *Society* was not such a dreadful thing and I was looking forward to the next event; which soon turned up, and which unfortunately, was also accompanied with some disaster, but about this another time, perhaps.

FREIHEIT, DIE ICH MEINE.

Freedom, gift I cherish
 Treasured in my heart,
 May you never perish
 Nor from us depart.
 Ever brightly shining
 In the starry skies,
 Our faith refining,
 Light that never dies.

In the shady woodlands,
 In the verdant dells,
 'Mongst the flow'ry garlands,
 There your spirit dwells.
 O how sweet its flavour,
 When in storm and stress,
 Gently freedom's favour
 You on us impress.

When God's spirit enters
 In our souls anew,
 And within them centres
 All that's good and true,
 When free men are meeting,
 Noble aims in view,
 Shall our hearts be beating,
 Liberty, for you.

(Translated by J.J.F.S.)

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