

**OLGA ZANELLI: A
TALE OF AN
IMPERIAL CITY**

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Olga Zanelli: a tale of an imperial city by Fairfax L. Cartwright

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A Tale of an Imperial City

BY
FAIRFAX L. CARTWRIGHT

" . . . dans cette vie
Rien n'est bon que d'attendre n'est rien que de souffrir "

VOLUME



FIRST

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OLGA ZANELLI.

CHAPTER I.

OF the clubs of Berlin perhaps the most luxuriously fitted up, and the one most in keeping with our English ideas of what a club-house should be, is the Jockey Club, situated in a little street which runs into that great thoroughfare of Berlin, the avenue called the Unter den Linden. Less exclusive than its rival, the dreary and solemn Casino of the officers, the Jockey Club counts among its members persons belonging to the highest aristocracy as well as wealthy Jew bankers and merchants, and even some individuals of questionable antecedents, the one bond of union between these discordant elements being a love of sports and of cards. The Jockey Club enjoys a great reputation in the sporting world of Germany, and on days when there is racing at Charlottenburg or Hoppegarten, it generally turns out a very respectable coach and four for the use of its members.

On that Sunday afternoon in the latter part of the month of April of the year 188—, there had been

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racing of some importance at Charlottenburg; and as the weather had been preternaturally fine and warm for that uncertain and changeable month, crowds of people had been attracted to the racecourse, and the Emperor himself had driven out and patronised the races for a short time. Many members who had sporting tastes had come up from the country for the day, so that on that evening the club-house was remarkably full. In the great saloon, hung with portraits of famous racehorses, a din of conversation was going on; and if one listened attentively to it, one soon discovered that it was entirely about racing matters, bets and odds and other kindred subjects, with now and again disputes respecting the merits of a horse, and explanations why it had not won.

At the further end of the room were a group of persons, who were engaged in loud discussion. In the centre sat the Duke of Bismuelberg, the head of the great family of the Hohenschwanzs. He was an elderly gentleman, easy-going and good-tempered, except when he was losing at cards, a patron of the turf, and an inveterate gambler. He was the possessor of an immense fortune, but of late he had somewhat impaired it by his reckless betting and gambling, in which occupations he was zealously assisted by his four sons, young lieutenants in various regiments of the Guards. He was president of the Jockey Club, and on account of this and of the great name he bore he was always treated with the greatest consideration by every one whenever he entered the club-house.

Opposite to him sat Herr Seldangenbeck, a tall, middle-aged, stoutish person, with a somewhat bloated

appearance. His history was rather curious. Born in a provincial town of Jewish parents in a small way of business, he had become at an early age a clerk in a Hamburg house trading with London. On one occasion he was sent to England on business; he happened to arrive during the Derby week, and as he had heard so much about the great English carnival, he determined to go and see for himself what it was like. The impression it left upon him was immense; it changed his whole aim in life. On returning to Hamburg he took seriously to the study of horse-racing; he frequented the society of the few English jockeys and stable-boys who resided in that city, and he learnt to speak their slang, so that in after life his English always retained the flavour of the stable. Whenever his work as a clerk would allow of it, he would run over to England to attend the great race meetings, starving himself during many months to save the necessary funds for the journey, as well as to have something over to lay upon a horse. Gradually he succeeded in making the acquaintance of some of the persons connected with the great training establishments at Newmarket, and through them in course of time he got to be on speaking terms with several leading jockeys and trainers. The sporting foreigner became a great favourite. The racing information he succeeded in obtaining from his friends he used to such good purpose, that in a few years he had amassed by careful betting nearly a thousand pounds. Then with a sigh of relief he threw up his clerkship and turned his whole attention to racing matters, which just at that moment began to

attract considerable notice in Germany. He attended every meeting of any importance, laid bets wherever he could, generally with considerable benefit to himself, and so slowly and carefully he continued to increase his capital. Four years after throwing up his clerkship he made his first venture in buying a racehorse. That day he ever afterwards celebrated by giving an annual dinner to his friends. This horse, which was not much fancied, and which he was therefore enabled to pick up at a sale for a trifling sum, turned out to be for him a veritable gold mine. It won race after race; and when at last it had to be retired to the stud, it continued to bring him in a steady income. This was the turning-point in his career; from this moment he became known throughout Germany as a leading sportsman, and as one of the most successful racing men in the country. The number of his horses increased fast, and by a series of brilliant but questionable racing coups he amassed a fortune, which was now generally estimated at some three millions of marks. He then removed to Hoppegarten, near Berlin, where he built himself a house and splendid stables on an English model, and he invited an English jockey at a large salary to come and live with him, to take over the management of his stables, and to ride his horses. A short time before this story begins Herr Schlangenbeek crowned his career as a sportsman by being elected a member of the Jockey Club, which was, indeed, an honour for a person of whom it might well be said that he had almost risen from the gutter.

Another member of the group sitting round the

Duke of Bammelberg was Count Immersdorf. He was a man of about forty years of age, tall and spare, with a sardonic expression in his face. At the first glance one could see that he was a man who had led a fast life; he looked much older than he was; his face was deeply marked with lines, and he was already considerably bald. He came of a good family, and his uncle held a high and important post at Court. He had been for several years an officer in the Guards, but he had had to retire on account of his debts, and at present he had no occupation; yet in spite of his well-known financial difficulties he seemed to be generally well supplied with money. Of late he had become very intimate with Herr Schlangenbeck, and ill-natured people naturally said that he was employed by that great racing man to do dirty work for him, for which he received a liberal remuneration.

"I can assure your Serene Highness my lord Duke," said Herr Schlangenbeck, with a deferential but awkward manner, "that so far as I know no horse of mine was ever pulled. Schlemil ran straight, and he was beaten because he was wanting in stamina. If your Serene Highness put money on my horse, I am sorry for it; and had I been aware of your Serene Highness's intentions, I would have saved you that loss."

"Confound the money!" replied the Duke. "What do I care about the trifling loss? But what I do object to is being swindled. If that jockey of yours did not pull Schlemil, I have no eyes in my head. Do you suppose that I frequent racecourses only since