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E-text prepared by Al Haines

HOW WOMEN LOVE

(Soul Analysis.)

Translated from the German of

MAX NORDAU,

Author of "Degeneration," "The Malady of the Century,"
"The Comedy of Sentiment," Etc., Etc

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JUSTICE OR REVENGE.

CHAPTER I.

A more unequally matched couple than the cartwright Molnár and his wife can seldom be seen. When, on Sunday, the pair went to church through the main street of Kisfalu, an insignificant village in the Pesth county, every one looked after them, though every child, nay, every cur in the hamlet, knew them and, during the five years since their marriage, might have become accustomed to the spectacle. But it seemed as though it produced an ever new and surprising effect upon the by no means sensitive inhabitants of Kisfalu, who imposed no constraint upon themselves to conceal the emotions awakened by the sight of the Molnár pair. They never called the husband by any other name than "Csunya Pista," ugly Stephen. And he well merited the epithet. He was one-eyed, had a broken, shapeless nose, and an ugly scar, on which no hair grew, upon his upper lip, so that his moustache looked as if it had been shaven off there; to complete the picture, one of his upper eye-teeth and incisors were missing, and he had the unpleasant habit of putting his tongue into these gaps in his upper row of teeth, which rendered his countenance still more repulsive.

The wife, on the contrary, was a very beautiful woman, a magnificent type of the Magyar race. She was tall, powerful, only perhaps a trifle too broad-shouldered. Her intensely dark hair and sparkling black eyes suited the warm bronze hue of her plump face, which, with its little mouth filled with magnificent teeth, its fresh full lips, the transparent, enamel like crimson of the firm, round cheeks, and the somewhat low, but beautifully formed brow, suggested a newly-ripe peach. This unusually healthy countenance, overspread with a light down, involuntarily produced in the spectator the impression that it must exhale a warm, intoxicating, spicy fragrance; it looked so tempting that one would fain have bitten it.

This had been much the feeling of the Uhlan officers who, with part of a company of men, were stationed in Kisfalu. From the first day that the three gentlemen had entered their village garrison the beautiful woman had attracted their attention, and they had seen in the husband's ugliness a pleasant encouragement to make gallant advances. The captain, a Bohemian gentleman, was the first to introduce himself to the fair wife. The morning of the second day after his arrival in the hamlet, taking advantage of the absence of the master of the house, he stole into the miserable clay hut tenanted by the ill-assorted pair, but remained inside only a few minutes, after which he came out with a deeply-flushed face and somewhat hasty steps, cast stealthy glances around him to the right and left, and then hurried away. In the afternoon of the same day, the young lieutenant tried his luck, but he too left the cartwright's hut more quickly than he had entered, and not exactly with the air of a conqueror. In the evening the three gentlemen met in the spare room of the tavern where they took their meals, and were remarkably taciturn and ill-tempered. On the third day the slender, handsome first lieutenant called on the cartwright's wife. He was a far-famed conqueror of women's hearts, which he was accustomed to win with as little trouble as a child gathers strawberries in the woods, and was envied by the whole regiment for his numberless successes, which he did not treat with too much reticence. This time the adventure lasted somewhat longer; those who were passing heard loud outcries and uproar for a short time, as if a wrestling match were going on in the hut, and the letter-carrier, an old woman, who was just going by, even stood still in surprise and curiosity. The curiosity was satisfied, for she soon saw the handsome Uhlan officer rush out, pressing his hand to his cheek as if he had a violent toothache. He looked very much dishevelled and made off with noticeable haste. He did not appear in the tavern at noon, so in the afternoon his two comrades sent their orderlies to him to enquire about his health; in the evening he joined them at table and showed his astonished friends a broad strip of black court-plaster on his right cheek.

"What does that mean?" asked the captain.

"It seems to be a bad cut," observed the lieutenant.

"Razor? sword-stroke? cat's claw?" continued the captain, pursuing his enquiries.

"Woman's nails!" burst forth the Don Juan of the regiment, and now the game of hide-and-peek between the trio ended, and they bewailed to one another, with comic despair, the ill-luck they had all encountered.

She had courteously asked the captain to what she owed the honour of his visit, and when, instead of answering, he pinched her plump cheek and put his arm around her waist, she flew into a passion and pointed to the door with the voice and gesture of an insulted queen. The lieutenant had found her far more ungracious; she did not ask what he desired, but angrily thundered, almost before he crossed the threshold, an order to march which permitted neither remonstrance nor refusal; finally, at the appearance of the first lieutenant, she had passed from the position of defence to that of assault, shrieked at him with a crimson face and flashing eyes to be off at once, if he valued the smooth skin of his cheeks; and when, somewhat bewildered, yet not wholly intimidated, he had ventured, notwithstanding this by no means encouraging reception, to attempt to seize and embrace her, as he was accustomed to do with the colonel's wife's maid, when, making eyes at him in the ante-room, she whispered under her breath: "Let me go, or I'll scream!" she rushed upon him literally like a wild-cat, and, in an instant, so mauled him that he could neither hear nor see, and considered himself fortunate to find his way out quickly. And when all three heroes had finished their tragi-comic general confession, they unanimously exclaimed: "The woman has the very devil in her!"

They would have learned this truth without being obliged to pass through all sorts of experiences, if, instead of indulging in self-complacent speculations concerning the possible combination of circumstances which had united the beautiful woman to so ugly a man, they had enquired about the cause of this remarkable phenomenon. They would then have heard a strange tale which might have deterred them from finding in Molnár's hideousness encouragement to pursue his wife with gallantries.

CHAPTER II.

Yes, Molnár's wife had the devil in her, and it was her family heritage. Her father, a poor cottager and day labourer, had been in his youth one of the most notorious and boldest brawlers in the neighborhood; even now, when prematurely aged and half-broken down by want and hard work, people willingly avoided him and did not sit at the same table in the tavern if it could be helped. In former years he had been a frequent inmate of the county prison, where the bruises and cuts received in the brawl on whose account he was incarcerated had time to heal; two years before he had been in jail three months because he had used a manure-fork to prevent a tax-collector from seizing his bed, and the beautiful Panna had then gone to the capital once or twice a week to carry him cheese, wine, bread, and underclothing, and otherwise make his situation easier, so far as she could.

The family vice of sudden fits of passion had increased to a tragedy in the destiny of the only son. He was a handsome fellow, slender as a pine-tree, the image of his sister, whom he loved with a tenderness very unusual among peasants; he early became the supporter and companion of his father in his Sunday brawls, and the village was not at all displeased when he was drafted into the army. It would have been an easy matter, as he was an only son, to release him from military service, but he was obliged to go because two fathers of soldiers could not be found in the village to give the testimony necessary for his liberation. He became a conscript in 1865, and, a year after, the double war between Prussia and Italy broke out. The young fellow's regiment was stationed in the Venetian provinces. One night he was assigned to outpost duty in the field; the enemy was not near, it was mid-summer, a sultry night, and the poor wretch fell asleep. Unfortunately, the commander of the guard, a young lieutenant full of over-zeal for the service, was inspecting the outposts and discovered the sleeper, to whom he angrily gave a kick to recall him to consciousness of his duty. The lad started up, and without hesitation or reflection, dealt his assailant a furious blow in the face. There was a great uproar, soldiers rushed forward, and had the utmost difficulty in mastering the enraged young fellow; he was taken to headquarters in irons, and, after a short trial by court-martial, shot on the same day. The family did not learn the terrible news until weeks later, from a dry official letter of the regimental commander. How terrible was the grief of the father and sister! The man aged ten years in a week, and the girl, at that time a child twelve years old, became so pale and thin from sorrow that the neighbors thought she would not survive it. Not survive it? What do we not outlive! She conquered the anguish and developed into the most beautiful maiden in the village.

There was an austere charm, an unintentional, unconscious attraction in her, which won every one. Her notorious origin was not visited upon her, and even the rich girls in the village gladly made her their friend. While at work in the fields she sang in a ringing voice; in the spinning-room, in winter, she

was full of jests and merry tales, as gay and gracious as beseemed her age. Probably on account of her vivacious temperament and the feeling of vigour which robust health bestows, she was extremely fond of dancing, and never failed on Sundays to appear in the large courtyard of the tavern when, in the afternoon, the whirling and stamping began. Her beauty would doubtless have made her the most popular partner among the girls, had not the lads felt a certain fear of her. A purring kitten among her girl companions, ready to give and take practical jokes, she was all claws and teeth against men, and many a bold youth who, after the dance, attempted to take the usual liberties, met with so severe a rebuff that he bore for a week a memento in the shape of a scratch across his whole face. Therefore she did not have a superabundance of partners, and thus escaped the jealousy which, otherwise, her charms would certainly have roused in the other girls.

A dispensation of Providence rendered her irritability the means of deciding the whole course of her life.

One Sunday, late in the summer, soon after the reaping and threshing were over—she was then twenty—she again stood in the bright warm afternoon sunshine in the spacious courtyard of the village tavern, among a gay group of giggling lasses, waiting with joyful impatience for the dancing to begin. The two village gipsies who made bricks during the week and played on Sundays, were already there, leaning against one of the wooden pillars of the porch in front of the house, and tuning their fiddles. The lads crowded together, shouting jesting remarks to the group of girls, who answered them promptly and to the point. One after another the young men left their companions and took from the laughing bevy of maidens a partner, who, as village custom required, at first resisted, but finally yielded to the gentle force—not without some pleasantly exciting struggling and pulling—and was soon whirling around with her cavalier amid shouting and stamping, till the dust rose in clouds.

The beautiful Panna, for reasons already known to us, was not the first person invited to dance. But at last her turn came also, and she could jump with a neighbour's son, till she was out of breath, to her heart's content. After spending more than fifteen minutes in vigorous, rapid motion, she finally sank, in happy exhaustion, upon a pile of bricks near a coach-house which was being built, and with flaming cheeks and panting bosom struggled for breath. Pista, the cartwright, profited by the moment to approach, and with gay cries and gestures invite her to dance again. Pista was a handsome fellow, but had the unfortunate propensity of drinking on Sundays, and this time was evidently intoxicated. The vinous suitor was not to Panna's taste, besides, she was already tired, and she did not answer his first speech. But as he did not desist, but seized her arm to drag her up and away by force, she tartly answered that she would not dance now. This only made him still more persistent.

"Why, why, you fierce little darling, do you suppose you can't be mastered?" he cried, trying with both hands to seize her beautiful black head to press a smack upon her lips. She thrust him back once, twice, with a more and more violent shove, but he returned to the attack, becoming ruder and more vehement. Then she lost her self-control, and the choleric family blood suddenly seethed in her veins. Bending down to the heap of bricks on which she had just sat, she grasped a fragment and, with the speed of lightning, dealt her persecutor a furious blow. Misfortune guided her hand, and she struck him full in the face. Pista shrieked and staggered to the neighbouring wall, against which he leaned half-fainting, while between the fingers of the hands which he had raised to the wounded spot, the red blood gushed in a horribly abundant stream.

All this had been the work of a moment, and the young people who filled the courtyard did not notice the outrageous act until the mischief was done. Shrieks, running hither and thither, and confusion followed. The fiddlers stopped and stretched their necks, but prudently kept aloof, as they had learned to do during frequent brawls; the girls screamed and wrung their hands, the youths shouted hasty questions, crowding around their bleeding companion. Water was quickly procured, cold bandages were applied to the swollen, shapeless face, and other efforts were made to relieve him, while at the same time he was besieged with questions about the event.

After dealing the fatal blow Panna had stood for a moment deadly pale, as if paralyzed, and then darted off as though pursued by fiends. Perhaps this was fortunate, for she would have fared badly if the enraged lads had had her in their power, when all, amid the confused medley of outcries, had learned the truth. There was no time to pursue her, for Pista seemed to be constantly growing worse; the cold water and fomentations did not stop the bleeding; he soon lost consciousness and lay on the ground amid the terrified, helpless group, an inert mass, until some one made the sensible proposal to carry him home to his mother, a poor widow, which, with their united strength, was instantly done.

Meanwhile, Panna had rushed to her own home, locked herself in, and sat on the bench by the stove, an image of grief and despair. She was incapable of coherent thought, nothing but the spectacle of the bleeding Pista staggering against the wall, stood distinctly before her mind. But she could not give herself up to her desolate brooding long; at the end of fifteen minutes the bolted door shook violently.

She started up and listened; it was her father, and she reluctantly went to the door and opened it. The old man entered, shot the bolt behind him, and asked in a trembling voice:

"For God's sake, child, what have you done?"

Panna burst into a flood of tears; they were the first she had shed since the incident described.

"He pressed upon me too boldly. And I didn't mean to do it. I only wanted to keep him off."

"You were possessed. The devil is in us. To kill a man by a blow!"

The girl shrieked aloud. "Kill, do you say?"

"Sol was just told. They say he is dead."

"That is impossible, it's a lie," Panna murmured in a hollow tone, while her face looked corpse-like. She seemed to cower into herself and to grow smaller, as if the earth was swallowing her by inches. But this condition lasted only a few minutes, then she roused herself and hurried out, ere her father could detain her. She entered a narrow path which ran behind the houses and was usually deserted, and raced as fast as her feet would carry her to the hut occupied by Frau Molnár, which was close at hand. Springing across the narrow ditch which bordered the back of the yard, she hurried through the kitchen-garden behind the house and in an instant was in the only room it contained except the kitchen. On the bed lay a human form from which came a groan, and beside it sat old Frau Molnár, who wrung her hands without turning her eyes from her suffering son. Thank God, he was not dead, the first glance at the piteous scene showed that. Panna involuntarily clasped her hands and uttered a deep sigh of relief. Frau Molnár now first noticed Panna's entrance; at first she seemed unable to believe her eyes, and gazed fixedly at the girl, with her mouth wide open, then starting up she rushed at her and began to belabour her with both fists, while heaping, in a voice choked by fury, the most horrible invectives upon her head. Panna feebly warded off the blows with outstretched arms, hung her head, and stammered softly:

"Frau Molnár, Frau Molnár, spare the sick man, it will hurt him if you make such a noise. Have pity on me and tell me what the injury is."

"You insolent wench, you God-forsaken,"—a fresh torrent of vile invectives followed—"do you still venture to cross my threshold? Begone, or I'll serve you as you did my poor Pista."

The mother again gained the ascendancy over the vengeful woman.

She turned from Panna, and hastened to her son, on whom she flung herself, wailing aloud and weeping. The girl took advantage of the diversion to leave the room slowly, unnoticed. She had seen enough; Pista was alive; but he must be badly injured, for his whole head was wrapped in bandages, and he had evidently neither seen nor heard anything of the last scene which, moreover, had lasted only a brief time.

Panna did not go far. A wooden bench stood by the wall of the house under the little window of the kitchen, which looked out into the yard. Here she sat down and remained motionless until it grew dark. She had seen by the bandages that the doctor must have been there, and hoped that he would return in the evening. If this hope was not fulfilled, she could go to him without danger after nightfall, for she was determined to speak to him that very day and obtain the information which Pista's mother had refused. Before darkness had entirely closed in the physician really did appear, and entered the hut without heeding the girl sitting on a bench near the door, perhaps without noticing her. Panna waited patiently till, at the end of a long quarter of an hour, he came out, then, with swift decision she went up to him and touched his arm. He turned and when he recognized her, exclaimed in surprise: "Panna!"

"Softly, Doctor," she pleaded with glance and voice, then added: "Tell me frankly how he is, frankly, I entreat you."

"You have done something very, very bad there," replied the physician hesitatingly, then paused.

"His life is not in danger?"

"Perhaps not, but he will be a cripple all his days. One eye is completely destroyed, the nose entirely crushed, the upper lip gashed entirely through, and two teeth are gone."

"Horrible, horrible!" groaned Panna, wringing her hands in speechless grief.

"He will not lose his life, as I said, though he has lost a great deal of blood from the wound in the lips, and the lost eye may yet cause us trouble, but the poor fellow will remain a monster all his days. No girl

will ever look at him again."

"There's no need of it," she answered hastily, and when the physician looked at her questioningly, she went on more quietly as if talking to herself: "If only he gets well, if he is only able to be up again." Then, thanking the doctor, she bade him good-night, and returned slowly and absently to her father's hut.

All night long Panna tossed sleeplessly on her bed, and with the earliest dawn she rose, went to her father, who was also awake, and begged him to go to old Frau Molnár and entreat her forgiveness and permission for her, Panna, to nurse the wounded man.

At the same time she took from her neck a pretty silver crucifix, such as peasant women wear, a heritage from her mother, who died young, and gave it to her father to offer to the old woman as an atonement. She had nothing more valuable, or she would have bestowed it too.

"That is well done," said her father, and went out to discharge his duty as messenger.

It was a hard nut which he had to crack. The old mother was again fierce and wrathful and received him with a face as black as night; but he accosted her gently, reminded her of her Christian faith, and finally handed her the silver atonement. This touched the old dame's heart. She burst into a torrent of tears, upbraided him with the magnitude of her misery, said that she would never be able to forgive, but she saw that the girl had acted without any evil design, that she was sorry—

Pista, who had been delirious during the night, but was now better, had hitherto listened quietly and intently. Now he interrupted the flood of words his mother poured forth amid her sobs, and said softly, yet firmly:

"Panna is not entirely to blame; I was persistent, I was tipsy, she was right to defend herself. True, she need not have been so savage, but how can she help her blood? I ought to have taken care of myself; I ought to have known whom I was chaffing." Then, turning to the visitor, he added: "If it will soothe Panna to know that I am not angry with her, send your daughter here, and I will tell her so myself."

Fifteen minutes later Panna was in the Molnárs' hut. She entreated the old mother to attend to her household affairs and not trouble herself about the sick man; that should be her care. She arranged the wretched bed, cleared up the room, brought Pista water to drink when he felt thirsty, and when everything was done, sat silently beside the bed. Pista quietly submitted to everything, and only gazed strangely with his one eye at the beautiful girl.

In the course of the morning the physician came and renewed the bandages. Panna stood by his side and kept all sorts of things ready, but she did not have courage to look at the wounds. The doctor thought it would be beneficial to have ice. But where was ice to be obtained in a village at this season of the year! The brewery probably had some, but would not be likely to give any away. Panna said nothing, but when the bandages had been renewed and the physician had gone, she hurried directly to the brewery, went to the manager, a good-natured, beery old fellow, and entreated him, in touching words, for some ice for a sick person. The manager blinked at her with his little half-shut eyes, and answered: "You can have it, my child, but not gratis."

Panna lowered her eyes and murmured mournfully: "I will pay what you ask, only not now, I haven't any money, surely you will wait a little while."

"It needn't be cash, one little kiss will do."

Panna flushed crimson, and a flash of anger like the lightning of a sudden storm blazed over her face; but she controlled herself and held up her compressed lips to the voluptuary, who rudely smacked them and then took from her hand the pipkin she had brought, returning it in a few minutes filled with ice.

The supply did not last long, but, when it was exhausted, Panna did not go herself, sending in her place old Frau Molnár with a pleasant greeting to the manager of the brewery. True, the latter frowned and sneeringly asked why Her Highness did not appear in person, but he had wisdom enough to give the ice for which she asked.

At the end of a week Pista had improved so much that the ice-bandages were no longer needed, and he did not require constant nursing. Panna who, hitherto, had come early in the morning and returned late in the evening, now appeared only twice a day to enquire for the sick man and bring him some refreshment, if it were only a handful of blackberries. Of course, during all this time, there was no end of putting heads together and whispering, but Panna did not trouble herself about it, and quietly obeyed the dictates of her conscience.

Thus three weeks had passed since the fateful day. When, on the third Sunday, Panna entered the Molnár's hut at the usual hour, this time with a small bottle of wine under her apron, she found Pista, for the first time, up, and dressed. He was just turning his back to the door as the girl came in. She uttered a little exclamation of surprise, Pista turned quickly and—Panna started back with a sudden shriek, the flask fell shattered on the floor, and she covered her face with both hands. It was her first sight of the young man's horribly disfigured countenance without a bandage.

Pista went up to the trembling girl and said mournfully: "I frightened you, but it must have happened some day. I felt just as you do now when, a week ago, I made my mother hand me a looking-glass for the first time. I see that it will be best for me to become a Capuchin monk, henceforth I must give up appearing before the eyes of girls."

Panna hastily let her hands fall, gazed full at him with her sparkling black eyes, and said gently:

"You always have girls in your head. Must you please them all? Wouldn't one satisfy you?"

"Why, of course, but the one must be had first," replied Pista, with forced cheerfulness.

Panna flushed crimson and made no reply; Pista looked at her in surprise and doubt, but also remained silent, and in a few minutes the girl went away with drooping head.

Pista now went to work again and endured days of bitter suffering. He was ridiculed because a girl had thrashed him, the cruel nickname of "the Hideous One" was given him, people gazed at him with horror whenever he appeared in the street. Panna continued to visit him every Sunday, but he received her distantly, taciturnly, even sullenly.

So Christmas came. On Christmas Eve Panna had a long talk with her father, and the next morning, after church, he again went to old Frau Molnár and without any preamble, said bluntly and plainly:

"Why won't Pista marry my Panna?"

The widow clasped her hands and answered:

"Would she take him?"

"You are all blind mice together," scolded the peasant, "of course she would, or surely she wouldn't do what she has done for months past. Isn't it enough that she runs after the obstinate blockhead? She can't ask him to have her."

Just then Pista himself came in. His mother hesitatingly told him what she had just heard, and the old woman looked at him enquiringly and expectantly. When the young man heard what they were discussing he became very pale and agitated, but at first said nothing. Not until his mother and the guest assailed him impatiently with "Well?" and "Is it all right?" did he summon up his composure and reply:

"Panna is a good girl, and may God bless her. But I, too, am no scoundrel. Honest folk would spit in my face, if I should accept Panna's sacrifice. I'd rather live a bachelor forever than let her do me a favour and poison her own life."

His mother and would-be father-in-law talked in vain, he still persisted:

"I cannot believe that Panna loves me, and I won't take favours."

The simple, narrow-minded fellow did not know that the sense of justice and absolute necessity can move a human soul as deeply, urge it as strongly to resolves, as love itself, so from his standpoint he really was perfectly right.

To cut the matter short: Pista remained obdurate from Christmas until New Year, notwithstanding that his mother and Panna's father beset him early and late. The girl suffered very keenly during this period, and her eyes were always reddened by tears. But when New Year came, and still Pista did not bestir himself, the strong, noble girl, after violent conflicts in her artless mind, formed a great resolution, went to Pista herself, and said without circumlocution, excitement, or hesitation:

"I understand your pride and, if I were a man, would behave as you do. But I beg you to have pity on me. If you don't have an aversion to me, or love another, marry me. I shall not do you a favour, you will do me one. Unless I become your wife, I shall never be happy and contented so long as I live, but always miserable whenever I think of you. As your wife, I shall be at peace, and satisfied with myself. That you are now ugly is of no consequence. I shall see you as you were, before—" Here, for the first

time, she hesitated, then with a sudden transition, not without a faint smile, said:

"And it will have its good side, too, I shall not be obliged to be jealous."

"But I shall!" exclaimed Pista, who had hitherto listened in silence.

"Nor you either, Pista," she said quickly, "for whenever I see your face I shall say to myself how much I must make amends to you and, believe me, it will bind me far more firmly than the handsomest features could."

Pista was not a man of great intellect or loquacious speech. He now threw his arms around Panna's neck, patted her, caressed her, covered her head and her face with kisses, and burst into weeping that would soften a stone. Panna wept a little, too, then they remained together until long after noon and, in the evening, went to the spinning-room and presented themselves as betrothed lovers. Three weeks after they were married amid a great crowd of the villagers, some of whom pitied Pista, others Panna, and from that time until the moment when the incidents about to be described occurred, they lived together five years in a loyal, model marriage.

CHAPTER III.

Besides the church and the tile-roofed town hall built of stone, the main street of Kisfalú contained only one edifice of any pretension, the manor or, as it is called in Hungary, "the castle" of Herr von Abonyi. It was really a very ordinary structure, only it had a second story, stood on an artificial mound, to which on both sides there was a very gentle ascent, and above the ever open door was a moss-grown escutcheon, grey with age, on which a horseman, with brandished sword, could be discerned in vague outlines, worn by time and weather.

The owner of this mansion, Herr von Abonyi, was a bachelor about fifty years old.

His family had lived more than three hundred years on their ancestral estates, which, it is true, were now considerably diminished, and he was connected by ties of blood or marriage with all the nobility in the county of Pesth. Up to the year 1848 the whole village of Kisfalú, with all its peasants, fields, and feudal prerogatives (such as mill, fish, tavern and other privileges) belonged to the Abonyis, and the present lord, Carl von Abonyi, came from that gloomy time, termed—I know not why—"patriarchal," when the peasant had no rights, and the nobleman dwelt in his castle like a little god, omnipotent, unapproachable, only not all-wise and all-good, walked through his village whip in hand, like an American "Massa," and dealt the peasant a blow across the face if he did not bow humbly and quickly enough, ordered the village Jew to be brought to the manor, stretched on a bench by two strong lackeys (called in Hungary heiducks) and soundly thrashed whenever he felt a desire for cheap amusement; regarded the women of the village, without exception, as his natural harem, spent his days and nights in immoderate feasting and wild drinking, derived all his education from the Bible with 32 leaves (the number of cards contained in the pack commonly used in the country), and only displayed to ladies of his own station a certain romantic chivalry, which was manifested in rude brawling with real or imaginary rivals, unrestricted duelling on the most trivial pretext, exaggerated gallantry and ardent homage, serenades which lasted all night long under the windows of the favoured fair, and similar impassioned, but tasteless eccentricities. At the present time all this has certainly greatly changed, but many of the nobles who, in the year 1848, the period of the vast transformation, had partly or wholly attained maturity, could not or would not adapt themselves wholly to the new era; in their inmost hearts they still consider themselves the sovereign lords of the soil and its inhabitants, and it is with rage and gnashing of teeth that they force themselves not to display this feeling in words and deeds at every opportunity.

Abonyi, an only son, was a lieutenant in the Palatine Hussars, when the revolution of 1848 broke out. He at once joined the honveds with his troop and, in their ranks, performed, until the close of the war for freedom, prodigies of daring on every battle field, rising, in spite of his youth, within less than eleven months, to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. After the disaster of Vilagos, he fled from the country and spent several years in Turkey as a cavalry officer. In 1860, he again returned home and took possession of his estates, which since his father's death, occurring meanwhile, had been managed by a legally appointed trustee. What wrath and raging there was! The regulation of property-ownership had been executed during the trusteeship, and as Abonyi believed, with outrageous curtailment and robbery of the lords of the estate. The best, most fertile fields—so he asserted—had been allotted to the

parish, the most sandy, barren tracts of the land to him; the parish had the beautiful oak forest, which had already been shamefully ravaged, he, on the other hand, received the reed-grown, marshy border of the stream; in the division of the pasturage the peasants had the easily cultivated plain, which was therefore at once ploughed by the new owners, he, on the contrary, the gravelly, steep hillside; in short, he was almost insane with rage when he first saw what the commission had made of his land, and the trustee who had unresistingly agreed to all these unjust acts would have fared badly, if he could have laid hands upon him the first time he went to inspect the bounds of the parish. There was nothing for him to do, however, except to adapt himself to the new state of affairs as well as he could; for nothing could be accomplished by indictments, because the trustee had possessed full legal authority to act, and everything had been done in strict accordance with the law. Far less could he hope to effect anything by violence, since peasants understand no jesting if their beloved acres are touched, and, at the first sign of any intention on his part to disturb their possessions, would quickly have set fire to his house and, moreover, tattooed on his body, with the tines of a pitchfork, a protest to which a counter-plea would scarcely have been possible. Only he could never carry self-control and composure so far that, after nearly twenty years' habitude, he did not become furiously excited at the sight of certain pieces of land, and experience something akin to a paroxysm of longing to shoot, like a mad dog, the first peasant who came in his way.

The disposition to command, which he had indulged from childhood, he was unwilling even now to renounce. Under existing circumstances his name and property alone would certainly no longer permit him to indulge this habit, so he sought an office. When the Austrian magistrates were removed in Hungary and the ancient county government restored, Abonyi had only needed to express the wish, and the "congregation" of the county, which consisted almost exclusively of his relatives and friends, elected him president of the tribunal^[1] of his district.

Now he could imagine himself transported back to the fine old feudal times before the March revolution. The peasants were again obliged to raise their hats humbly to him, his hand dispensed justice and mercy, the ancestral rod was brandished at his sign, and the whipping bench, a pleasing symbol of his power, always stood ready below the windows of his castle. When he drove through the country on official business or pleasure, his carriage was drawn by four horses with a harness hung with bells; if a peasant's cart was in the way and did not hasten at the sound of the familiar little bells to move out, the heiduck in coloured livery, with a sword at his side, sitting by the driver, shouted an order and an oath to the laggard, and the coachman, while dashing by, dealt the disrespectful loiterer a well-aimed blow. He might even fare still worse if the humor happened to seize the grandee in the spring carriage.

It would no longer do to get the village Jew and have him flogged for pastime on long afternoons; but there were still gipsies who were summoned to the castle to make sport for the noble lord. They played their bewitching melodies, and if he was filled with genuine delight, he gave the fiddlers, right and left, an enthusiastic slap in the face which echoed noisily, then took a banknote from his pocket-book, spit upon it and clapped it on the swollen cheeks of the howling gipsies, whereupon they again grinned joyfully and played on with two-fold energy.

Although Abonyi was a pattern magistrate, at the second election, which according to the old county system, occurred every three years, he suffered defeat. Political party considerations and government influence sustained another candidate. So Abonyi was again relegated to private life, but his birth and the office he had filled gave him sufficient personal distinction to induce his village, immediately after, to compensate him in some degree for his overthrow by a unanimous election to the position of parish magistrate.

This gentleman, with whose course of life and prominent personal characteristics we are now familiar, went one hot August afternoon to the stables, which formed the back of the courtyard, to inspect the horses and carriages, as was his custom.

Abonyi was in a very bad humour that day, for there had been a violent dispute with the harvesters, who cut and threshed on shares, and who had claimed more grain for their portion than seemed just to the owner of the estate. It did not improve his mood to find that his favourite saddle-horse had its right hind fetlock badly swollen and could not be used for a week. So he entered the coach-house, half of which, separated by a board-partition, served for a hay-loft.

The first thing on which his eye fell here was a man lying stretched comfortably on the straw, snoring. He recognized in the sluggard "hideous Pista," who had been summoned to the castle that morning to put new spokes into some broken carriage-wheels. The work he had commenced, a chaos of naves, spokes, felloes, tires, and a variety of tools, lay in a heap beside him, but he was sleeping the sleep of the just.

It needed nothing more to fan Abonyi's secret rage into a blaze of fury, and he shouted fiercely:

"Devil take you, you idler, will you get off of my hay?"

Pista, evidently not fully roused by the call, merely grunted a little in his dream and turned over to continue his nap. But the other could now control himself no longer, and dealt the recumbent figure a violent kick, roaring:

"Up, I say, up, you gallows-bird, you're paid for working, not for snoring!"

Pista, with a sudden spring, stood on his feet, and was instantly wide awake. Looking angrily at the brutal intruder with his one eye, he said in a voice quivering with suppressed anger: "I'm not working for you by the day, but by the job, and if I sleep, I do it at my own loss, not yours. Besides, I don't remember that I ever drank the pledge of brotherhood with you."

Abonyi threw up his head, his face growing crimson as if he had received a blow on the cheek.

"What," he shrieked, "does the rascal dare to insult me under my own roof? I'll teach you at once who I am, and who you are." And he raised the riding-whip which he usually carried, to deal Pista a blow.

The latter's kindly, free peasant blood began to boil. Taking a step backward, he grasped a pitchfork lying within reach of his hand, and hissed through the gaps in his teeth, as he brandished the weapon of defence:

"Woe betide you if you touch me! I'll run the fork into you, as true as God lives!"

Abonyi uttered a fierce imprecation and hastily retreated three paces to the door, where he called back to the cartwright, who still maintained his threatening attitude: "This will cost you dear, you scoundrel!" and before Pista could suspect what his enemy meant to do, the latter had shut the door and bolted it on the outside.

Pista's first movement was to throw himself against the door to burst it open with his shoulder, but he paused instinctively as he heard Abonyi's voice, shouting loudly outside.

"János," called the latter to the coachman, who stood washing the horses' harnesses beside the coach-house door, "go up to my chamber and bring me down the revolver, the one on the table by the bed, not the other which hangs on the wall!"

János went, and stillness reigned in the courtyard. Now the prisoner's rage burst forth. "Open! open!" he roared, drumming furiously on the oak-door. Abonyi, who was keeping guard, at first said nothing, but as the man inside shouted and shook more violently, he called to him: "Be quiet, my son, you'll be let out presently, not to your beautiful wife, but to the parish jail."

"Open!" yelled the voice inside again, "or I'll set fire to the hay and burn down your flayer's hut."

This was an absurd, ridiculous threat, for in the first place Pista, if he had really attempted to execute it, would have stifled and roasted himself before the mansion received the slightest injury, and besides, as examination afterwards proved, he had neither matches nor tinder with him; but Abonyi pretended to take the boast seriously and cried scornfully:

"Better and better! You are a sly fellow! First you threaten me with murder, now with arson; keep on, run up a big reckoning, when the time for settlement comes, we will both be present."

János now appeared and, with a very grave face, handed his master the revolver.

"Now, my lad," Abonyi ordered, "run over to the town-hall, bring a pair of strong hand-cuffs and the little judge,[2] the rascal will be put in irons."

Pista had again heard and remained silent because he had perceived that blustering and raging were useless. So he stood inside and Abonyi outside of the door, both gazing sullenly into vacancy in excited anticipation. The gardener, who was laying out a flower-bed which surrounded three sides of the fountain in the centre of the courtyard, had witnessed the whole scene from the beginning, but remained at his work, apparently without interest.

The town-hall was only a hundred paces distant. In less than five minutes János returned with the beadle. Abonyi now retreated a few steps, aimed the revolver, and ordered the beadle to open the door. The bolt flew back, the sides of the folding door rattled apart, and Pista was seen on the threshold with his hideous, still horribly distorted face, the pitchfork yet in his right hand.

"Forward, march!" Abonyi ordered, and the cartwright stepped hesitatingly out into the courtyard.

"Put down the pitchfork, vagabond, it belongs to me," the nobleman again commanded.

Pista cast a flashing glance at him and saw the muzzle of the revolver turned toward himself. He silently put down the fork and prepared to go.

"Now the irons," Abonyi turned to his men, at the same time shouting to the gardener, "You fellow there, can't you come and help?"

The gardener pretended not to hear and continued to be absorbed in his blossoming plants. But, at Abonyi's last words, Pista swiftly seized the pitchfork again, shrieking:

"Back, whoever values his life! I'll go voluntarily, I need not be chained, I'm no sharper or thief."

The coachman and the beadle with the handcuffs hesitated at the sight of the threatening pitchfork.

"Am I parish-magistrate or not?" raged Abonyi, "do I command here or not? The vagabond presumes to be refractory, the irons, I say, or——"

Both the servants made a hasty movement toward Pista, the latter retreated to the door of the coach-house, swinging the pitchfork, the beadle was just seizing his arm, when a shot was suddenly fired. A shrill shriek followed, and Pista fell backward into the barn.

"Now he has got it," said Abonyi, in a low tone, but he had grown very pale. The coachman and the beadle stood beside the door as though turned to stone, and the gardener came forward slowly and gloomily.

"See what's wrong with him," the nobleman ordered after a pause, during which a death-like silence reigned in the group.

János timidly approached the motionless form lying in the shade of the barn, bent over it, listened, and touched it. After a short time he stood up again, and, with a terribly frightened face, said in a voice barely audible:

"The hole is in the forehead, your honour, he doesn't move, he doesn't breathe, I fear"—then after a slight hesitation, very gently—"he is dead."

Abonyi stared at him, and finally said:

"So much the worse, carry him away from there—home—" and went slowly into the castle.

The servants looked after him a few moments in bewilderment, then laid the corpse upon two wheels, which they placed on poles, and bore him off on this improvised bier. This time the gardener lent his aid.

[1] A Hungarian office.

[2] Hungarian name for beadle.

CHAPTER IV.

When the men, accompanied by several children who were playing in the village street and had inquisitively joined the passing procession, appeared at the Molnárs' hut with their horrible burden, the beautiful Panna was standing in the kitchen, churning. At the sight of the lifeless form lying on the bier, she uttered a piercing shriek and dropped the stick from her hands, which fell by her side as though paralyzed. It was at least a minute before her body was again subject to her will and she could rush to the corpse and throw herself prone upon it.

Meanwhile the men had had time to carry the dead form into the room adjoining the kitchen and set the bier upon the clay floor, after which they took to their heels as if pursued by fiends; at least János and the beadle did so; the gardener had remained to try to comfort the poor woman, so suddenly widowed, in the first tempest of her despair.

Panna lay on her husband's dead body, wringing her hands and moaning: "Oh, God! oh, God!"

sobbing until even the gardener, a stolid, weather-beaten peasant, and anything but soft-hearted, could not restrain his own tears. Not until after several minutes had passed did the young wife raise herself to her knees, and ask in a voice choked with tears, what all this meant, what had happened.

"The master shot your Pista," replied the gardener in a tone so low that it was scarcely audible.

"The master? Pista? Shot?" repeated Panna mechanically, absently, as if the words which she slowly uttered belonged to an unknown, incomprehensible language. She stared at the gardener with dilated eyes, and her lips moved without emitting any sound. At last, however, understanding of the present returned, and the words escaped with difficulty from her labouring breast: "Oh, God, oh, God, how could it happen? How could God permit such misery?" Again she was silent, while the gardener looked away and seemed to be examining the opposite house with the utmost attention through the panes of the little window.

But Panna was beginning to think more clearly and to recover from the dull stupor into which the sudden shock had thrown her. Still kneeling beside the corpse, wringing her hands, and amid floods of tears, she began again:

"The master shot my poor Pista from carelessness?"

The gardener hesitated a moment, then he said:

"Not from carelessness, poor woman."

In an instant Panna was on her feet, stood beside the gardener at a single bound, grasped him by the shoulder, and said in a firm, harsh voice, while her tears suddenly ceased to flow: "Not from carelessness, you say? Then it was intentional?"

The gardener nodded silently.

"That is impossible, it cannot be, no innocent person is murdered, and I am certain that Pista has done nothing; he was the gentlest man in the world, he wouldn't harm a fly, he hadn't drunk a drop of wine in five years, he— Have no regard for me! Tell me everything, and may God reward you for remaining with me in this hour."

The gardener could no longer withhold the truth, and acquainted her with the occurrence whose commencement the coachman János had described to him on the way, whose tragical close he himself had witnessed. Panna listened silently, never averting her eyes from the body during the entire story. In the midst of a sentence from the gardener, she suddenly uttered a shriek, and again threw herself upon the dead man.

"Here, here is the hole!" she murmured. "Horrible! horrible!"

Hitherto she had had before her eyes only a vague, shapeless, blood-stained vision, without being able to distinguish any details; now for the first time she had seen, amid the blood and oozing brains, the terrible wound in the forehead. But this interruption lasted only a moment, then Panna again stood beside the gardener and begged him to continue.

He soon reached the catastrophe, which once more drew a scream, or rather a quickly suppressed, gasping sound, from the widow, and then closed with a few well-meant, but clumsy, words of consolation.

Here Panna interrupted him.

"That's enough, Friend, that's enough; now I know how it all was and I will comfort myself. If you have anything to do, don't stay with me longer, and may God reward you for what you have done."

"What do you mean to do now?" asked the gardener, deeply moved.

"Nothing. I mean a great many things. I have much to do."

She went into the kitchen and soon came back with a wooden water-pail and a coarse linen towel. Placing the vessel on the floor beside the corpse, she began to wash the face, without taking any farther notice of her visitor. During her melancholy task she only murmured from time to time in broken sentences; "Oh, God, oh, God!—No, God is not just—Pista, the gentlest man—he was not like us—he was not hot-tempered—What is God's will?"

The gardener felt that he was not wanted, so, after exhorting the widow to be calm and to come to him if she needed advice or help, he went away. She had nodded and, without turning her head, called after him again: "God will repay you!"

When left alone, Panna carefully dried the dead man's face, placed under his head a pillow which she took from the bed, kissed his poor, ugly face,—sobbing meanwhile from the very depths of her heart,—and covered it with a gay little silk kerchief which he had brought to her from the last fair. Then she hurriedly made some changes in her own dress and left the house, whose door she locked behind her.

Without looking round, she walked rapidly to the field where she knew that her father was working, which she reached in a quarter of an hour. He was toiling with other day-labourers in a potato-patch, pulling the ripe roots out of the ground, and when she came up was stooping over his work. He did not notice his daughter until she was standing by his side and touched him lightly on the shoulder with her finger.

Then he straightened himself, exclaiming in great astonishment:

"Panna! What is the matter?"

A glance at her made him start violently, and he added in a subdued voice:

"A misfortune? Another misfortune?"

Panna did not reply, but grasped his arm and, with long, swift strides, led him far beyond the range of hearing of the other workmen. When they had reached the edge of the field, she said softly:

"Father, Herr von Abonyi has just shot my Pista out of sheer wantonness, like a mad-dog."

The old peasant staggered back several paces as if he had been hit on the head with a club. Then his face, whose muscles had contracted till it resembled a horrible mask, flushed scarlet, he uttered a tremendous oath, and made a sudden movement as though to hurry away.

But Panna was again at his side, holding him fast.

"What are you going to do, Father?"

"There—the hoe—the dog must die—he must be killed—now—at once—I'll run in—I'll split his head—die—the dog," he panted, trying to wrench himself from his daughter's strong grasp.

The latter held him still more firmly.

"No, Father," she said, "try to be calm. I am quiet. Rage has never been a good counsellor to us. I thought you would take it so, and therefore I wanted to tell you myself, before you heard it from others."

The old man swore and struggled, but Panna would not release him.

"Father, be sensible, we are not living among robbers, an innocent man is not shot down unpunished. You need not split his lordship's head, another will do that, a greater person than you or he. There is a law, there is a court of justice."

Her father grew calmer, his distorted face began to relax. Panna now released his arm, sat down on the boundary-stone beside which they had been standing, and, gazing fixedly at the ground, while rolling the hem of her apron between her fingers, she continued, speaking more to herself than to him,

"We certainly know best that punishment will not fail. They shot our poor Marczi, and he only gave a man a blow. If you ever had a little quarrel with any one in the tavern, they imprisoned you for weeks and months. I, too, have atoned for the crime I committed; nothing remains unpunished, and the nobleman will get his deserts, as we have always received ours."

The sun was setting, and the notes of the vesper-bell echoed from the distance. The old man picked up his hoe, which he had left in the furrow and, lost in thought, walked home with his daughter in silence. Panna prepared the bed she had used when a girl in her father's hut, and went to rest early. It is not probable that she slept during the night. At least she was already completely dressed when, very early the next morning, the parish-beadle knocked at the door of the hut, and it was she who opened it.

He asked for the key of her house, because the corpse must be carried to the town-hall.

"Why?"

"Because, early in the forenoon, the committee and the district physician will come from the city to hold the coroner's inquest."

"Will he be present?"

"Who?"

"The—Herr von Abonyi."

The beadle shrugged his shoulders and said,

"I don't know."

Panna did not give up the key, but went with the beadle herself, and was present when the latter appeared, with three other men and a bier, and bore the corpse away.

The coachman János, and another servant, also came to fetch the wheels and poles on which they had brought the dead man home the day before, and which belonged to the castle. Panna locked her door behind them, and followed the corpse to the town-hall.

In the centre of the court stood a long black table, surrounded with all sorts of pails and various utensils, and near it a small one with writing materials and a chair before it. Meanwhile the body was left on the bier beside the table and covered with a horse-blanket. A great crowd of people, among them many women, and even little children, flocked into the building in a very short time, thronged about the bier, the black table, and Panna, who was leaning against it, carrying on a low, eager hum of conversation till it seemed as though countless swarms of bumble-bees were buzzing through the air.

About eight o'clock two carriages drove up, from which descended five dusty gentlemen, dressed in the fashion of the city, and a servant. These were the examining magistrate, the prosecuting attorney, the district physician, a lawyer, and a clerk of the court, then the beadle, who carried a box containing the dissecting instruments. In the absence of the parish-magistrate—it was remembered that Abonyi held this office—the gentlemen were received by the village notary (parish clerk) and ushered into the interior of the building, where an abundant breakfast awaited them. Meanwhile the people were dismissed from the courtyard, and as the mere request did not induce them to move fast enough, were urged forward with gentle force, after which the gate was closed and bolted on the inside. Panna had been obliged to go out with the others, but she would not leave the spot, where she was joined by her father, though she entreated him to return home or go to his work in the field and not meddle with anything.

At nine o'clock the little funeral-bell in the church-steeple began to toll, and at the same time the post-mortem examination took place, but did not last long, as it was only necessary to open the cavity of the skull. The investigation proved that the missile, a lead, cone-shaped bullet of large calibre, had entered above the left eye, torn its way through the left-half of the brain in a curve passing from above to the lower portion within, and lodged in the pons vorolii. Under such circumstances, death must have been instantaneous.

When all was over, the beadle again opened the gate and admitted the curious throng. The village notary went to Panna and asked whether she wished to have the funeral from the town-hall, or from her own house. She decided in favor of the latter plan, and the notary gave the necessary orders to the beadle. A coffin had been ordered by the gardener the day before, and was ready for delivery. Some old women offered to attend to dressing the body and preparing it for burial, notifying the clergyman, etc., so Panna was spared all the mournful business details which demand attention from a crushed spirit at a moment when it is so incapable of forming any sensible, practical conclusions, and could therefore remain near the committee.

After the post-mortem examination was over, the members went to view the scene of the deed. Panna followed, and was silently permitted to do so by the beadle and the constable, while the throng of villagers was kept back. A mist dimmed Panna's eyes, when she saw the place where the crime was committed, but she bore up bravely and watched the proceedings around her with the utmost attention.

The gentlemen entered the coach-house and, standing at the door, she could hear the physician say that he thought he noticed blood-stains on the floor. The examining magistrate sketched a slight plan of the place in his note-book, and ordered János and the gardener, who were in the vicinity, to be brought in by the beadle. They were required to point out the places where they were standing at the time of the misfortune, and to briefly relate in turn the details of the story, during which the prosecuting attorney and the lawyer for the defense made notes. All this afforded Panna infinite satisfaction. She felt her heart grow lighter, and became calm, almost cheerful. A voice in her soul said: "There—there is justice!" and every letter which the gentlemen, with swiftly moving pencils, scrawled on the paper, seemed to her a link in the steel chain which was being forged before her eyes, ever longer and heavier, and would serve to drag the criminal fettered before the tribunal.

From the castle, the committee returned to the town-hall, and now followed the real official examination of the witnesses, whose previous information had been taken merely as unofficial

information, and not as legal depositions. They were summoned singly into the room and examined, first János, then the gardener, and lastly the beadle. When the latter came out Panna, who, until then had waited patiently at the threshold, stepped resolutely into the chamber, though the constable told her that she had not been summoned.

The examining magistrate looked at the new-comer in surprise, and asked what she wanted.

"What do I want?" replied Panna in astonishment, "why, to be examined as the others have been."

"Were you present when the misfortune happened?"

Panna felt a pang in her heart when the examining magistrate used the word "misfortune." She would have wished him to say "crime." But she answered with a firm voice.

"No, I was not present."

"Then you cannot be a witness."

"I am not a witness, I am the accuser."

The lawyer for the defense smiled faintly, but the prosecuting attorney drew himself up and answered sternly and impressively, before the examining magistrate had found time to open his mouth.

"You are mistaken, my good woman. I am the accuser, and you have nothing more to do here."

"That is true," the magistrate now remarked. "If you desire to obtain damages from Herr von Abonyi, you can bring the complaint before the civil court. You have nothing to do with the criminal trial."

"But it is my husband, my Pista, who has been murdered!" cried Panna, who was beginning to be greatly excited.

The prosecuting attorney twirled a lead-pencil between his fingers, but the examining magistrate rose, took the widow by the hand and led her to the door, saying soothingly: "You don't understand, my good woman; the point in question is not your Pista, but our Pista. He was a member of society, and his cause is the cause of all of us. Rely upon it, you will have justice." While speaking he had opened the door and given the constable a sign to lead the woman away.

This was not necessary; Panna went voluntarily, after casting a strange look at the magistrate which somewhat perplexed him.

The cartwright's funeral took place in the afternoon amid a great throng of villagers. Since his mother's death Molnár had had no relatives in the place, and his wife and her father were the only mourners among the concourse which followed the coffin to the cemetery. The Catholic pastor, who was often Abonyi's partner at his evening card parties, delivered an edifying address beside the open grave. He took for his text the verse (Matthew v. 44): "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you," and said a great deal about forgiveness and reconciliation. The listeners were much moved, and frequently wiped their eyes. Panna alone was tearless and sullen, she felt enraged with the fat, prating priest, who did not seem to her to speak sincerely.

After the funeral she went with her father to his hut, and there the two sat at the table opposite to each other, gazing into vacancy without uttering a word. But they did not remain long undisturbed in their gloomy meditations, for the door soon opened and the priest came in with a smooth, unctuous: "Praised be Jesus Christ!"

"In eternity, amen!" replied the old man in a dull tone, rising slightly from his chair, while Panna sat still in silence.

The priest took his seat beside the widow and, in sweet, cajoling words, began to enlarge upon the subject of his funeral address. He exhorted her, as her confessor, to remember that she was a Christian, she must forgive her adversaries, nay, even love her enemies, that she, too, might be forgiven; if she cherished anger and vengeance in her heart, her sin would be greater than Herr von Abonyi's—

Here Panna threw back her head and looked at the honeyed speaker so fiercely, that he found it advisable to follow another course. He represented to her that Abonyi had committed the deed by some incomprehensible rashness, in a sort of delirium and that he desired nothing more ardently than to make amends for the consequences of the luckless act, so far as lay in human power. While speaking, he put his hand into his pocket and drew out a bank-note of large amount, which he laid on the table.

Panna could bear no more. Seizing the money furiously, she threw it violently on the floor and, with rolling eyes and quivering lips, shrieked:

"I want justice, not alms. He must hang—I must see him dead like my Pista, before I am at peace."

The priest now lost his evangelical mildness also, and rose angrily, exclaiming:

"Fie! fie! you are a pagan, a pagan, and belong to all the fiends in hell." With these pious words he went away. The bank-bill, crushed into a ball, flew out of the room after him, then the door banged violently.

CHAPTER V.

The committee, after the official proceedings were over, had returned to the city, but not until the constable had given the beadle information which afforded food for village gossip during several days. It was learned that, directly after the fatal act, Herr von Abonyi had saddled a horse and ridden alone to the city to denounce himself. It was late in the evening when he reached the examining magistrate's house. The latter, an old friend of Abonyi, was much troubled and shocked, and it was long ere he could collect himself sufficiently to be able to take the deposition of the acknowledged criminal. It was ten o'clock before all the formalities were settled, then the magistrate, deeply agitated, took leave of his unfortunate friend. The former had not considered it necessary to arrest him, as Abonyi had pledged his word of honor to hold himself always ready to obey the summons of the court.

Panna of course heard these tales, as well as other people, and she also noticed how they were received in the village. There were numerous comments, some foolish, some sensible; as usual, opposite parties were formed; one condemned Abonyi's being left at liberty, the other thought it perfectly natural, since it could not be supposed that so great and rich a man as Carl von Abonyi would make his escape under cover of the darkness, like a strolling vagabond who has nothing but a staff and a knapsack. Panna of course belonged to the malcontents. It did not enter her head that any one could be permitted to go about unmolested, after killing a man. The ingenious distinctions between imprisonment while awaiting trial, and imprisonment as a punishment were too subtle for her, and she did not wish to understand them; she only knew that whenever her father was brought before the examining magistrate, he was detained, and used to wait in jail two months and longer, until at last condemned to a fortnight's imprisonment, which was considered expiated by the imprisonment while awaiting trial.

Justice seemed to her far too slow. What kind of justice was this which delayed so long, so torturingly long? Punishment ought to follow crime as the thunder follows the lightning-flash. The murdered man's death-glazed eyes ought to be still open, when the murderer is dangling on the gallows. This was the demand of Panna's passionate heart, but also of her peasant-logic, which could comprehend the causal relation between sin and expiation clearly and palpably, only when both were united in a single melodramatic effect. Why was nothing heard of a final trial, of a condemnation? For what were the legal gentlemen waiting? Surely the case was as clear as sunlight, with no complication whatever, the criminal had acknowledged everything. Even if he had not, there were three witnesses who had all been present, the committee had seen the corpse, the hole in the forehead, the bullet from the revolver, the blood-stains in the coach-house, was not all this a hundred times enough to condemn a man on the spot? Yet week after week elapsed, and nothing new was heard of the matter.

Meanwhile it was rumoured in the village that Abonyi was visiting a friend, a land-owner in the neighboring county, with whom he was constantly engaged in hunting. This might and might not be true.

At any rate it seemed to Panna atrocious that it was even possible.

When one evening the gardener, who was no longer in Abonyi's service, came to see the widow, she poured out her heart, which was brimming with bitterness, to the kind, faithful fellow.

"Isn't it enough to enrage a dove, that Pista has been mouldering in the ground six weeks and his murderer still goes about at liberty, perhaps enjoys himself in hunting?"

The gardener tried to soothe the infuriated woman, and said all sorts of things about the laws, forms,

etc.

"Laws? Forms?" Panna excitedly broke in, "where were these laws and forms when our Marczi, my brother, was executed a few hours after his offence? And he had not killed any one, only dealt a harsh officer a blow."

"That was in the army, Panna, that was in war; it is an entirely different matter."

"Indeed? And is it also a different matter that, a few years ago, the vine-dresser's Bandi was hung three days after he set fire to his master's barn?"

"Of course it is different, at that time we were under martial law."

"So once it was war and once it was martial law—that's all nonsense, and I'll tell you what it is: our Marczi and the vine-dresser's Bandi were peasants, and Herr von Abonyi is a gentleman."

The gardener made no reply, perhaps because he secretly shared Panna's belief; but her father, who had been sitting at the table, cutting tobacco with a huge knife and taking no part in the conversation, suddenly struck its point so violently into the table that it stuck fast, vibrating and buzzing, and exclaimed:

"Panna, Panna, I told you so then! The best way would have been to split the dog's skull with the hoe that very day."

Meanwhile the affair pursued its regular course, which neither the impatience of those concerned hastens nor their submission delays, and one morning the gardener came to Panna's hut with the news that he had received the summons to appear as witness at the trial, which was to take place in four days. This was nearly three months after the murder, and it was already late in November.

Panna knew that the witnesses were reimbursed for the expense incurred for the carriages in which they drove to the city, and begged the gardener to take her with him to the court, which the latter readily promised.

On the appointed morning the peasant's vehicle appeared in front of Panna's hut at a very early hour. It was not yet five o'clock, and dense darkness obscured the village and the neighbourhood. But Panna already stood at her door, and was seated in the carriage almost before it had stopped. She wore a black dress, a dark shawl covered her shoulders, at her throat was her old silver crucifix, which had again come into her possession after her mother-in-law's death, and on her head was a black silk kerchief, which set off her beautiful face so marvellously that one might have supposed she had studied the effect, had not this grave, strong woman been so wholly incapable of any act of coquetry. She was pale and thoughtful, and during the whole way did not address a single word to the gardener, who sat beside her, occasionally glancing at her with admiring approval, only one could see that the deep gloom which during the past few weeks had constantly shadowed her features had disappeared.

In fact, she was calm, almost content. The satisfaction due her had been delayed a strangely long time, but at last it would be hers; to-day she, too, was to learn that the hand of justice could stroke her with maternal kindness, after having hitherto, during her whole life, experienced only its power to deal blows.

The road which, in the autumn, had been thoroughly soaked, had recently been frozen hard by the early frosts, and they made such rapid progress that, after a ride of barely five hours, the vehicle reached the city and stopped in front of the town hall.

The beginning of the examination had been fixed at ten o'clock, but it was fully eleven before it commenced. The room in which it took place presented no imposing appearance. It was an apartment, or if one chooses to call it so, a hall of ordinary size, with four windows; in the centre was a wooden railing which divided it into two nearly equal parts; inside was the usual apparatus of justice, a green-covered table with writing materials and a black crucifix, between two candlesticks, placed on a platform for the court-room; at the right, also on the platform, a small table for the prosecuting attorney; below, a wooden bench for the defendant, two police officers, and a little table for the lawyer for the defence. Outside the railing stood a few wooden benches, which afforded room for about forty persons.

When Panna entered with the gardener the other two witnesses, János and the beadle, were already in the space set apart for the audience, and also the village notary, the new parish magistrate, a rich peasant and cattle-dealer named Bárány, the pastor, several other residents of Kisfalú, and two or three owners of estates in the county, friends of the defendant.

Panna, who sat in the front row, directly by the railing, had no eyes for her surroundings, and scarcely noticed that every one was gazing at her with curiosity and interest. Her mood was calm, almost solemn, and she gazed steadily at the door in the end of the room through which the court must enter.

At last a constable appeared, who moved the armchairs, arranged the papers on the green table, and then noisily opened the doors. The three judges, followed by the constable, came in and took their seats; with them appeared the prosecuting attorney, the same one who had taken part in the preliminary examination in Kisfalú, and almost immediately after a side-door opened and Herr von Abonyi entered, accompanied by his lawyer and followed by a man whose uniform cap showed that he was some official. This individual remained standing at the door, while Abonyi took his seat on the wooden bench and the lawyer in his chair.

Abonyi had bowed to the court when he entered, and now cast a searching glance at the spectators. But he involuntarily started and hastily averted his head, without noticing the smiling greetings of his friends, for the first things he beheld were Panna's flashing black eyes, which had pierced him when he first appeared, and which he actually seemed to feel burning through his clothes, and consuming his body, as he turned away from them.

Panna was intensely excited; her heart throbbed violently and her eyebrows contracted in a gloomy frown. Abonyi's appearance had destroyed a large share of her consoling and soothing illusions. She had had a vague idea that he would be brought in in some humiliating convict garb, perhaps with handcuffs or even with his feet chained, and sit between two soldiers with fixed bayonets, deserted, humble, penitent. Instead of that she saw Abonyi just as she was in the habit of seeing him, attired in an elegant black suit, smoothly-shaved and carefully combed, with plump cheeks and smiling lips, head erect and bold eyes, more distinguished in appearance than any one inside the rail, without the slightest token in aspect and bearing which could mark him as a man charged with a heinous crime, in short here, just as in his village, thoroughly the *grand seigneur*.

The presiding judge opened the proceedings and ordered the clerk of the court to read the accusation, which was homicide through negligence, as well as the minutes of the coroner's inquest and the other documents of the investigation, then he proceeded to the examination of the accused, asking the usual questions concerning his name, age, etc., in a courteous, kindly tone, wholly devoid of sternness, which filled Panna with vehement rage. This was not the terrible personification of the fell punishment of crime, but a smooth farce, acted amid universal satisfaction.

Now the judge reached the kernel of the matter, and asked the defendant to state the circumstances of the event which formed the subject of the legal proceedings. Abonyi, in a somewhat unsteady voice, related that on the fatal day he had gone to his coachhouse and found "his workman" asleep; he had roused him and warned him to be more industrious, then the fellow became amazingly insolent and defiant, and threatened him so roughly with a pitchfork, that he owed his escape with a whole skin solely to his rapid flight, and the presence of mind with which he bolted the furious man into the shed.

Panna listened with dilated eyes and open mouth; a burning flush suffused her cheeks, her breath came in gasps, and bending far forward, she clenched the railing convulsively with both hands. It seemed incredible that she could have heard correctly. What, is it possible to lie so in a court of justice, in the presence of the black crucifix, the judges, the listeners? And the prosecutor does not interrupt him in his infamous speech? The earth which holds the murdered man, now slandered in his very grave, does not open and swallow the shameless liar?

The gardener, who perceived what was passing in her mind, laid his hand upon her arm and whispered into her ear: "For heaven's sake, Panna, keep quiet, control yourself, or if you cannot, go out of the room."

Panna impatiently motioned to him to keep silent, for the defendant was continuing his story. He related how the imprisoned cartwright had constantly raged and threatened murder and arson so that, as parish magistrate, he had considered it his duty to have the dangerous fellow arrested. To intimidate the rebellious man, he had sent for a revolver, which he thought was not loaded, and this was accidentally discharged—

"Lies! Wretched, base lies!" shrieked Panna, shaking her clenched fist furiously at Abonyi, who turned pale and paused in his story. A passing tumult arose; the listeners crowded around Panna, who had started up, and tried to force her back into her seat and to quiet her. The presiding judge frowned and was about to speak, when the prosecuting attorney told him in a hasty whisper who the disturber was. But Panna continued to cry out: "Don't believe him, gentlemen, he is lying! He shot him intentionally and without cause."

She would have said more, but the judge interrupted her, exclaiming violently: "Silence, unhappy woman, you are making yourself guilty of a serious offence and deserve that we should inflict exemplary punishment. But we will have compassion on your condition and content ourselves with turning you out of the room."

At the same time he beckoned to the constable, who, with the individual standing behind the defendant, and a watchman posted in the audience-room, seized the screaming woman and, in spite of her struggles, forced her out of the door.

This interruption had lasted several minutes and evidently affected all present very unpleasantly. Now, calmness gradually returned and the trial could pursue its course. After the defendant, the turn of the witnesses came. Their depositions were to elucidate two points especially: whether Molnár had really behaved in such a manner that deeds of violence might be expected from him, and it was necessary to threaten him with a weapon and put him in fetters—also, whether the revolver had been discharged accidentally or intentionally.

The first witness, János, gave his testimony cautiously and sinuously; he did not know how the dispute had begun; he was not present while Pista uttered the threats of which Herr von Abonyi spoke, as he had gone first to fetch the revolver and then the beadle; Pista had certainly seemed angry and excited, and would not permit handcuffs to be put upon him; he, János, had his back turned to his master when the shot was fired.

The beadle, too, could only say that Pista would not suffer himself to be fettered, and that he had not noticed the discharge of the revolver.

Now the gardener was summoned. Abonyi looked sharply at him; the witness bore the gaze quietly and began to speak. He stated that Pista had always been a harmless, peaceful man, while the nobleman, on the contrary, was arrogant and harsh in his intercourse with common people.

The lawyer for the defence interrupted him with the words: "You are not asked for a certificate of good conduct!" and the judge admonished him to keep to the point.

The gardener, unintimidated, added that Herr von Abonyi had first inflicted bodily abuse on the cartwright, who was not his employee, and the latter then threatened him or rather defended himself.

The judge asked if he had seen this.

"No," replied the witness, "but János saw it and told me."

János was recalled and confronted with the gardener. He could remember nothing about it.

The examination was continued. The gardener testified that Pista had been willing to submit to arrest, but would not allow himself to be handcuffed, for which, moreover, not the semblance of necessity had existed. Besides, Herr von Abonyi had had an evil intention when he sent for the revolver, for he asked expressly for the one lying on the table by the bed, and the whole parish knew that this weapon was always loaded. So it was false that Herr von Abonyi supposed he held an unloaded pistol in his hand.

The judge addressed his last question to the witness: "Did you see the defendant fire the weapon intentionally?"

The gardener replied that no one could have seen that, except a person who stood directly beside the criminal and watched his finger closely; he could only say that Herr von Abonyi kept the weapon constantly aimed, and his finger on the trigger, so that he, the gardener, had involuntarily thought that some mischief would happen, and that the shot was fired at the precise moment when Pista raised the pitchfork against the servant, who was pressing upon him.

The lawyer for the defence rose and informed the court that the witness was a servant whom Abonyi had discharged.

"I was discharged after I gave the same testimony at the preliminary examination which I have given to-day," observed the gardener quietly.

"Speak only when the court questions you!" said the judge reprovingly; then he whispered a short time with his companions in office, and finally announced that the last witness would not be sworn.

The gardener looked at the judge in bewilderment and returned to his place among the audience.

The prosecuting attorney now began his speech. He censured Abonyi for sending for the revolver,

and the command to handcuff the refractory man seemed to him to show over-zeal and somewhat unjustifiable severity; there was no ground to believe that murder was intended, yet the defendant had committed a grave offence when, yielding to an absurd notion, he had deemed it proper to threaten the cartwright with a fire-arm. He would therefore propose to sentence Abonyi for homicide through negligence to—six months' imprisonment.

Abonyi's lawyer tried to show that the revolver had not been superfluous, since it was necessary to inspire a furious man, who was threatening deeds of violence, with salutary terror, and thereby restrain him from excesses. As parish-magistrate, it was Abonyi's duty to oppose the cartwright, and when the latter scorned and rebelled against the authorities, Abonyi had been fully justified in compelling the cartwright to respect his orders, even by forcibly handcuffing him. For the unfortunate accident which resulted in the loss of a human life, Abonyi could not be held responsible, and he therefore requested the acquittal of his client.

The prosecuting attorney replied that it was not fully proved that Molnár had been so refractory that handcuffing was indispensable; but he would admit that it was necessary to maintain the dignity of the magistracy energetically, in the midst of a turbulent, insubordinate populace.

Abonyi's lawyer answered that, instead of making any rejoinder, he had only one thing to say: his client would engage to provide for the unfortunate Molnár's widow by giving her a large piece of land and also settling upon her an annual income, legally secured, of four hundred florins.

A murmur of approval ran through the audience, suppressed by a stern command from the judge. After a short whispered consultation, during which the defendant was not even led out of the courtroom, the judge pronounced the sentence, that the defendant, for the homicide through negligence of Stefan Molnár, was condemned to six months imprisonment; any claims for compensation from those entitled to demand them were reserved and could be brought before the civil courts. The prosecuting attorney declared himself satisfied with the sentence, as his proposal had been fully accepted; the lawyer for the defence exchanged whispers a moment with the condemned man, and then also said that he would give up the appeal to a higher tribunal; the judge closed the proceedings, and Abonyi went out through the door by which he had entered, while the man with the cap followed respectfully.

When the gardener came out of the courtroom he saw Panna standing in the corridor, where she had been waiting since her expulsion from the court-room. Hurrying up to him, she asked with an anxious look, "Well?"

"Sentenced!" replied the gardener, turning his head away.

"Ah!" A low cry escaped her breast and her eyes sparkled. "Sentenced! And when?"

The gardener gazed at her inquiringly.

"What do you mean by when?"

"Why, when will he be—executed?"

"Executed? you are out of your mind. He is sentenced to six months' imprisonment."

Meanwhile they had gone down into the courtyard; at the gardener's words Panna suddenly stood still, stared fixedly at him, and said in a hollow tone:

"You know how I am, and what I feel, why do you jest so unpleasantly with me?"

"What I tell you is the most bitter earnest."

"Man! Six months! You are drivelling! That is impossible! A man who has murdered another can be acquitted, it may be said that he did not kill him, that the guilt was not proved, I understand that; but when it is admitted that he is guilty, he surely cannot be sentenced to six months' imprisonment! That is a mockery of mankind. My brother strikes a brutal officer—he is executed; the vine-dresser's Bandi burns a miserable barn—he is executed. This man kills a human being and gets six months' imprisonment. No, I cannot believe it."

The gardener contented himself with silently shrugging his shoulders in reply to the woman's passionate outburst of feeling, and pursued his way. Panna followed him with compressed lips. She could not help believing his communication, but she continually revolved it in her mind, still unable to comprehend its meaning fully. They were seated in the carriage again, and had driven a considerable distance, when she began once more:

"There are higher courts. It cannot be left so."

"No one entered an appeal, so the case will not go to the higher courts."

"Then you think that this six months is the last utterance of justice?"

"The last, Panna; only the king or God can still change the sentence."

Panna's eyes flashed.

"The king can change the sentence, you say?"

"He, of course," replied her companion laconically.

Panna said nothing more on the way home. Only the gardener once heard her murmur:

"Justice is a fine thing, a very fine thing."

CHAPTER VI.

It was late in the evening when Panna again reached Kisfalú. Her father was already expecting her with great impatience and, before she left the carriage, shouted a question about the result of the trial. Panna did not answer immediately, but cautiously descended, gratefully pressed the hand of the gardener, who had brought her to her own house, and entered the room with her father. Here she opened her lips for the first time, uttering only the words: "Six months!"

Her father struck the table furiously with his clenched fist, shrieking: "Then Hell ought to open its jaws and swallow the whole band! But wait, I know what to do. Six months will soon be over, and then I'll make short work with the fine gentleman. I'll be judge and executioner in one person, and the trial won't last long, that I swear by all the fiends."

Panna hastily interrupted him: "For Heaven's sake, Father, hush. If any one should hear it might be bad for you. What induces you to say such imprudent things? Do you want to be imprisoned for making dangerous threats? You know that they wouldn't use as much ceremony with you as with the nobleman. Only keep perfectly cool, we are not obliged to make ourselves the judge, there is still one person higher than the court, and he will decide our cause."

"What do you mean?" asked the father, looking inquiringly at Panna.

"You'll learn; only let me act, and keep cool."

The old man was not naturally curious, so he desisted and went to rest, Panna following his example.

The next morning Panna was seen moving to and fro very busily between her own house and her father's, and repeatedly entering the town-hall. With her father's help, she carried all their property to his hut and then offered the empty Molnár house for sale. There was no lack of purchasers, but the peasant does not decide quickly to open the strings of his purse, so it was three days before the bargain was concluded. But at last the business was settled and Panna received several hundred florins in cash. She gave the larger portion to her father, who bought a vineyard with them, and kept a hundred for herself. When this was done, Panna said that she had business in the city, hired a carriage, and went to Pesth.

The king was at that time in Ofen, where he gave public audiences daily. It is an ancient and wise custom of the Hapsburgs to make themselves easily accessible to the people. In Austro-Hungary no recommendation, gala attire, nor ceremony is requisite in order to see and speak to the sovereign. On the days when public audience is given, the humblest person is admitted without difficulty, and nothing is expected from him except that he will appear as clean and whole as possible, no matter how shabby he may be. The people are well aware of this and, at every opportunity, profit by the facility afforded to reach the king; there are persons who go to the monarch with a matter which, in other countries, a village magistrate would decide without farther appeal.

So Panna left her carriage at a peasant tavern outside of the city, and went on foot directly to the castle at Ofen. The audience began at twelve o'clock, and it still lacked half an hour of this time. Panna

passed through the outer door unrestrained, and was first asked what she desired by a guard on duty at the foot of the staircase leading to the royal apartments. Panna answered fearlessly that she was going to the audience, and the guardsman kindly showed her the way.

At the head of the stairs another official met her with the same query, and she gave the same reply. But this time the official also asked for her certificate of admission. Panna did not know what it was, and the functionary then explained that the king's audience chamber could not be entered so unceremoniously from the street, but a person must first announce himself and state his business, after which he received notice of the time when he was to present himself. Of course it would be too late for to day, but she could be registered for the next audience, which would be given in a fortnight. She probably had her petition with her, she need merely give it to him, and he would attend to everything for her the friendly man said at the close of his explanation.

Panna was obliged to confess that she had no petition, as she had thought that she would be able to tell the king the whole story verbally.

The smiling functionary explained the mistake. She must write the petition, for the king at the utmost would have only one or two minutes for her, and no long story could be told in that time; besides, she could not be recorded without a petition.

Panna became much dispirited and out of temper. She again saw beloved illusions disappear. She had imagined everything to be far smoother, more simple, easier, and now here also there were difficulties. She dejectedly followed her guide into an office, where she had all sorts of questions to answer about her name, residence, etc., and the purpose which brought her here. To the last inquiry she gave the curt information: "I am seeking justice from the king against an unjust sentence." Then she received a card with a number and a date, and was dismissed with the remark that she must be there again with her petition a fortnight thence, on Thursday, punctually at twelve o'clock, noon.

She had desired to keep her purpose a secret from every one in the village; but this was now impossible, for she could not prepare the petition alone. So she went to the gardener, who had obtained another place, and initiated him into her plans. He eagerly dissuaded her from the step, since nothing would come of it, but Panna remained immovable in her confidence in the result.

"The king," she said, "will secure me justice. It is impossible that he should hear of the atrocious sentence and not instantly overthrow it." And when the gardener continued to try to show her the contrary, she at last grew angry and said curtly: "Well, if you won't help me, I'll go to a lawyer in the city who, for money and fair words, will draw up the petition."

The gardener now relinquished any further opposition, and declared himself ready to compose the document.

They were together two days to accomplish the great work with their united powers. Evil tongues in the village sharpened themselves eagerly on the remarkable fact, and the rumors about the pair were endless. Some thought that the beautiful Panna had forgotten ugly Pista very quickly, others thought that the gardener was by no means amiss, though no longer very young; many said still more scandalous things. The young widow did not trouble herself about this chatter in the least; she had more important matters in her head and heart, and therefore could not hear the malicious whispers of the gossips.

The petition was begun three times, and as often torn in pieces. Panna wanted it to be very energetic, very vehement. The gardener softened the passionate expressions and suppressed the violent appeals. Of course he was not a practised writer, and he had serious difficulty in putting his thoughts into the correct form. But at last the composition was accomplished, and Panna read it ten times in succession till she knew every letter by heart. Her influence had been more dominant than the gardener's, and the petition was still very forcible. In awkward, but simple, impressive language, it accused the judge of partiality, described Abonyi and his crime in the darkest colors, quoted the cases of the shooting of Marczy and the hanging of Bandi, and finally demanded for Molnár's death the death of his murderer.

With this document Panna again went to Ofen, and this time she really obtained the audience. The whole scene affected her soul like some strange, wonderful face beheld in a dream. First she waited in the ante-room, among hundreds of other persons, most of whom were dressed in splendid uniforms, and covered with the stars of orders. She had no eyes for her surroundings, but thought only of her business and what she wanted to say to the king; suddenly her number, called loudly, broke in upon her reverie; Panna did not know how it happened, but the next moment she found herself in a room, which seemed to her fabulously magnificent, before her stood a figure in the uniform of a general, which she could not see distinctly because everything swam before her eyes; she faltered a few words about justice, and fell upon her knees; the figure bent over her, raised her, said a few gentle, pleasant words,

and took the petition from her trembling hand; then she was once more in the ante-room, with a hundred confused voices buzzing in her ears like the roar of distant surf. When the gardener and her father afterwards asked her for details, she was compelled to answer that she knew nothing, remembered nothing, had seen and heard nothing clearly; she only knew that the king had been very kind and took the petition from her.

From this time Panna was remarkably quiet and composed. She went about her usual work, attended to her household duties with her usual care, and seemed to think of the past no longer; at least she did not mention the painful incidents of which we are cognizant, either to her father or the gardener, who sometimes visited her, and when the latter once turned the conversation to them, she replied:

"Let us drop that; the matter is now in the right hands; another head is considering it, and we need no longer rack our brains about it."

The gardener understood what she meant, and her father only half heard these mysterious words without pondering over their thoroughly enigmatical meaning.

Thus six weeks passed away and the end of January was approaching when, one Sunday afternoon, the pastor unexpectedly entered Panna's hut. Without giving the astonished woman time for a remark, he sat down on the bench near the stove by her side, and said:

"Do not wonder, my child, that I have come again, after you so deeply offended and insulted me. I must not bear malice. It is my office to forgive wrong, and I would fain have you follow my example."

Panna gazed silently into her lap, but the priest continued in a voice which grew more and more gentle and insinuating.

"You see, you are still indulging your savage, pagan vengeance, and committing all sorts of follies which will yet ruin you. What is the use of it? Let the dead rest, and think of the living, of yourself, your future. What is the meaning of your going to the king and giving him a crazy petition——"

"What, do you know that, too?" cried Panna turning pale; she felt as if every drop of blood had gone back to her heart. "So the gardener tattled? Oh, fie! fie!"

"Nonsense, the gardener! We don't need the gardener for that. The petition has come from the king's cabinet to the office of the Home Secretary, which sent it through the county to the parish, that we might give a report of your mental condition. From your petition, you are believed to be insane, and that is fortunate, or you would be punished for contempt of court."

Panna clenched her teeth till the grinding sound could be heard, and obstinately persisted in her silence.

"Of course I know that your head is clear, only your heart is hardened, and I will pray to God that He may soften it. Herr von Abonyi is a very different Christian. You need not look at me so angrily, what I say is true. You know that he has great and powerful friends; it would cost them only a word, and he would be pardoned. They wished to appeal to the king in his behalf, but he would not permit them to take a step for him. He repents his deed, he has received a just punishment, and he wished to endure this sentence to the final moment. Through me, he entreats your forgiveness, he does not wish you and your father to remain his enemies, when he has penitently borne the punishment. You will probably owe it to him, if you have no unpleasant consequences to bear on account of your petition. You see how a man of principle and generosity behaves! And then, remember what I told you before: Herr von Abonyi is ready to provide for you all your life, as no one in your family was ever supported. Well, do you say nothing to all this? Have I nothing to tell the nobleman from you?" The pastor rose, laid his hand upon her shoulder, and looked her in the face.

Panna shrunk from the touch of his fat fingers, brushed them off, and said:

"Tell him it is all very well and we will see."

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing else."

The priest departed with an unctuous farewell, and left Panna alone. She remained motionless in the same position, with bent head, her hands resting nervelessly in her lap, her eyes staring into vacancy. So her father found her when, half an hour after, he returned from the parish tavern. When she saw him, she started from her stupor, rushed to him, and exclaimed amid a violent flood of tears:

"Father, it was all in vain, there is no justice on earth."

In reply to the astonished old man's anxious questions, she told him, for the first time, the story she had hitherto kept secret of her petition to the king, and the pitiful result of this final step.

Her father listened, shaking his head, and said:

"You see if, instead of acting on your own account, you had first asked my advice, you would have saved yourself this fresh sorrow. I could have told you that you would have accomplished nothing with the king."

Now, for the first time in many weeks, the old man again began to speak of the matter which had never ceased to occupy Panna's whole mind. He was choleric, and capable of a hasty deed of violence when excited, but he was not resentful; he was not the man to cherish anger long, and had already gained sufficient calmness to view Abonyi's crime more quietly and soberly. He represented to his daughter that it would be folly to demand the nobleman's life from the king in exchange for Pista's.

Panna answered sullenly that she did not perceive the folly; did her father think that a peasant's life was less valuable than a gentleman's?

"That isn't the point now. You must consider that the master did not kill your Pista intentionally."

"Stop, Father, don't tell me that. He *did* kill him intentionally. I don't care whether the purpose existed days or minutes before, but it was there; else he would not have sent for the revolver, he would not have aimed the weapon, touched the trigger, or discharged it."

"Even admitting that you are right, he has been punished for it."

Panna laughed bitterly. "Six months! Is that a punishment?"

"For a gentlemen like him, it's a heavy one. And he will provide for you."

"Do you, too, talk as the priest does, father? You ought to know me better. Do you really believe that I would bargain over Pista's life for beggerly alms? I should be ashamed ever to pass the churchyard where the poor fellow lies."

"You are obstinate, Panna. I see very plainly where you are aiming. You always say you want justice, but it seems to me that what you want is vengeance."

Panna had never made this distinction, because she was not in the habit of analyzing her feelings. But when her father uttered the word, she reflected a moment, and then said: "Perhaps so."

Yet she felt that it really was not vengeance which she desired, and she instantly added:

"No, Father, you are not exactly right, it is not revenge. I should no longer be enraged against Herr von Abonyi if I could believe that the law, which punished what he has done with six months' imprisonment, would for instance have punished you also with six months, if you had committed the same crime. But it cannot be the law, or they would not have shot Marczi for his little offence, you would not have been imprisoned three months for a few innocent blows. It is easy to tell me that the case is different. Or is there perhaps a different law for peasants and for gentlemen? If that is so, then the law is wicked and unjust, and the peasants must make their own."

The old man did not notice the errors and lack of logic in Panna's words, but he was probably startled by her gloomy energy.

"Child, child," he said, "put these thoughts out of your head. I have done so too. If I could have laid hands on the murderer at first—may God forgive me—I believe that Pista would not have been buried alone. But now that is over, and we must submit. After all, six months' imprisonment is not so small a matter as you suppose. You need only ask me, I know something about it. Oh, it is hard to spend a winter in a fireless cell, busy all day in dirty, disagreeable work, shivering at night on the thin straw bed till your heart seems to turn to ice in your body, and your teeth chatter so that you can't even swear, to say nothing of the horrible vermin, the loathsome food, the tyrannical jailers—a grave in summer is almost better than the prison in winter."

Panna made no reply, and the conversation stopped; but her father's last words had not failed to make a deep impression upon her imagination. She clung to the pictures he had conjured before her mind; she found pleasure in them, painted them in still more vivid hues, experienced a degree of consolation in them. While she was working in the house, her thoughts were with Abonyi in his prison; she saw him in the degrading convict-dress, with chains on his feet, as she had so often found her father when she visited him in jail; there he sat in a little dusky cell on a projecting part of the wall, eating from a wooden bowl filled with a thin broth, repulsive in appearance and smell and biting pieces

of earth-colored bread as hard as a brick; the cell was impregnated with horrible odours; the bare stone flags of the floor were icy cold; a ragged, dirty sack of straw, and a thin, tattered coverlet swarming with vermin covered the bench in the corner; in the morning the prisoner, like the others, was obliged to clean his cell and work at things whose contact sickened him; at noon he walked up and down the prisonyard, amid thieves and robbers, who jeered at and insulted the great gentleman; the jailers assailed him with rough words, perhaps even blows—yes, perhaps, her father was right, possibly Abonyi might have been better off lying in the grave than enduring the disgrace and hardships of the prison.

She gave herself up to these ideas, which almost amounted to hallucinations, with actual delight; she even spoke of them, told the neighbours about them as if they were facts which she had witnessed, and when, early in February, a peasant who had been sentenced to a year's imprisonment in the county jail for horse-stealing, was released and returned to Kisfalú, Panna was one of the first who visited him and asked if he had seen Abonyi in the county prison.

"Why, of course," replied the ex-convict, grinning.

Panna's eyes sparkled.

"You went to walk in the yard with him? They probably put him in chains?"

"You are talking nonsense, neighbour," said the peasant. "He wore no chains, and did not go into the yard with us. If I saw him, it's because I waited on him."

"Waited? You waited on him?"

"Certainly. Surely you don't suppose that he is treated like one of us! He lives in a pretty room, has his meals sent from the hotel, goes in and out freely during the day, and is only locked up at night for form's sake; he wears his own clothing and is served by the other prisoners; we all tried to get the place, for he pays like a lord. Hitherto, he hasn't found it very tiresome, for people came to see him every day and, when there were no visitors, he played cards with the steward. They say that, on New Year's Eve, he lost 140 florins to him; it gave us something to talk about for a week."

During this story Panna remained rigid and speechless, listening with her mouth wide open, without interrupting, and when the peasant paused she sat still a short time, as if her thoughts were far away, and then went out like a sleep-walker, leaving the man staring after her in astonishment at her strange behaviour.

From this hour she was a different person. She was no longer seen to smile, she scarcely spoke, did not open her lips all day, and avoided meeting people's eyes, even her own father's. When the gardener came to visit her, she evaded him if possible, and if she could not do that, sat by his side and let him talk while she gazed into vacancy. When, one Sunday afternoon, the priest again appeared in the hut, probably to renew his attempt at reconciliation, she darted out of the door like a will-o'-the-wisp the instant she saw him, leaving the amazed and disconcerted pastor alone in the room.

Panna went daily to the churchyard and busied herself for hours about her husband's grave. She ordered a stone cross from the city with the inscription: "To her cruelly murdered husband by his unforgetting widow." But when she wanted to have the monument set up, the priest interfered with great vehemence and declared he would never permit this cross to be placed in "his" churchyard. Panna did not make the least attempt to rebel against this command, but quietly told the workmen to carry the stone to her house; there it was leaned against the wall opposite to her bed, and daily, when she rose and went to rest, she sat a long time on the edge of her pallet, gazing thoughtfully at the cross and inscription.

Once she interrupted her father in the midst of an ordinary conversation with the abrupt inquiry, whether, in dismissing a prisoner, the time fixed in the sentence was rigidly kept, and if, for instance, any one was condemned to six months' imprisonment, this six months would run from the end of the trial or from the following morning.

The old man thought the question strange and did not know how to answer it. He, too, was secretly beginning frequently to share the opinion now tolerably current in the village, that Panna was not altogether right in her mind.

Meanwhile Spring had come, Panna worked industriously in the fields and in the vineyard, nothing betrayed what thoughts were occupying the mind of the silent, reserved woman. Not until the latter part of May did she begin to grow restless and excited, then she repeatedly entreated her father and the gardener, though it evidently cost her a great effort to control herself, to ask at the castle whether the day of the master's release was known. Her father flatly refused to comply with her crazy wishes,

and very earnestly exhorted her to trouble herself no farther about the castle and its owner. As for the gardener, he had cautiously intimated repeatedly that it would be unnatural for so young, robust, and beautiful a woman to remain a widow long, especially when there was some one who would consider himself only too happy to put an end to her widowhood, and he now added his entreaties to the old man's that she would at last banish from her mind the memory of the evil past.

Accident rendered Panna the service she had vainly asked of the two men. One evening, when she was returning from the fields, she passed the housekeeper at the castle who, with her back to the road, stood leaning against the low half-door of a peasant's hut, and called to her friend who was working in the yard: "Well, the master wrote to-day; he wants János to bring the carriage at six o'clock to-morrow morning to take him from the prison."

At this moment the peasant woman saw Panna passing, and made the housekeeper a sign which silenced her at once. But Panna had heard enough. She quickened her pace to reach home quickly, put down her hoe, and ascertained that her father was already in the house. Her voice betrayed no trace of excitement as she asked if he was going out again, which he answered in the negative. Then she went to her room, put on a warm woollen shawl, slipped the few florins she still possessed into her pocket, and went away, telling her father to go to sleep, she would be back again.

Hastening to a peasant who lived at the other end of the village, she begged him to drive her to the city at once; she would pay whatever he asked. The man replied that his horses were tired out, he had driven them to the pasture, and could not bring them home now, etc. Panna went to the second house beyond and repeated her request. This peasant was more curious than his neighbour and asked what she wanted in the city in such a hurry.

"My father has suddenly been taken very ill, and I must get a doctor."

"Why don't you go to the village surgeon if the case is so urgent?"

"I have been there," was the quick, glib answer which fell from Panna's tongue, "he isn't at home, and won't come before morning. He has been called to a farm two miles off."

"H'm! And you are leaving the sick man all alone?"

"He isn't alone, a neighbour is with him."

"Wouldn't it be better for you to ask the neighbour to go to the city, and stay with your father yourself?"

"To cut the matter short, neighbour," Panna, who had grown terribly impatient, now burst forth, "will you take me or not? I'll answer your foolish questions on the way."

The peasant cautiously named the price of the ride, which Panna, without a word of objection, instantly placed in his hand, after which he at last went to draw out the waggon and harness the horses. A few minutes later the vehicle was rolling over the dusty high-road.

Panna, wrapped in her shawl, sat on a bundle of straw which the peasant had put in to furnish a seat for his passenger, staring with dilated eyes at the landscape, illumined by a soft radiance. It was a marvellously beautiful night in May. The full moon was shining in a cloudless sky, the ripening grain waved mysteriously to and fro in the white light, over the darker meadows a light mist was rising which, stirred by the faint breeze, gathered into strange shapes, then dispersed again, now rose a little, now sank, so that the straggling bushes scattered here and there alternately appeared above the floating vapour and were submerged in it; the fragrance of the wild flowers mingled with the fresh exhalations from the damp earth and gave the warm air a stimulating aroma. Now and then, where the bushes grew more thickly along the edge of the road, the rapturous songs of the nightingales were heard, the only sound, except the distant barking of a dog, or the buzzing of a huge night-beetle flitting past the waggon, which, at times, interrupted the silence of the night.

But Panna's senses were closed to all this varied beauty. Her whole existence, all her thoughts and feelings were now centred upon a single point, the purpose which brought her to the city. With a torturing effort, which drove the blood to her brain, she again reviewed the events of the past month, of her whole life. She strove to examine them on all sides, judge them impartially, consider them from various standpoints.

Was it right that Abonyi should now be at liberty to move about as the great lord he had always been, after being permitted to make himself comfortable for six months in a prison, which was no jail to him? Was it not her duty to execute the justice which neither the laws nor men would practise? Had she not a perfect right to do so, since she, and those who belonged to her, had hitherto always atoned fully and

completely, rigidly and more than rigidly, for every sin?

In her early childhood her soul had been ravaged by a terrible grief, which had never been overcome; the law had killed her brother; in her girlhood, she had been tortured by only too frequent repetitions of the sight of her father, whom the law had loaded with chains and punished with severe imprisonment; her sorely wounded heart had found consolation only in a single thought which, amid her sufferings and afflictions, had gradually become established as firmly as a rock within her soul, that every sin found a harsh punishment, that this was an immovable, inexorable law of the universe, which could not be escaped, that it would be easier to pluck the stars from the sky than to do wrong without atoning for it. When, by a sudden act of violence, she injured Pista for life, it was instantly apparent to her that she owed expiation for it, and she had not hesitated or delayed an instant in punishing herself more severely than any judge would have done, by voluntarily sacrificing the happiness of her whole existence. This had cost her no self-conquest, it was a matter of course; the eternal law of the universe of sin and atonement required it, and to this demand there could be no resistance.

This law was her religion, she believed it and could not help believing; if she did not, if there was no august law of the universe, beyond all doubt, that sin exacted pitiless requital, it surely would not have been necessary to shoot her brother, to deliver her father so often to the hardships of prison-life, to bind her own youth to a hideous being whom she did not love when she married him, whom only the consciousness of duty voluntarily and proudly fulfilled afterwards rendered dear to her. If this was not a necessity, surely God, fate, mankind—use whatever name you choose—had basely, atrociously, robbed her brother, her father, and herself of life and happiness, and their destiny was enough to cause frenzy, despair, madness!

No, no, that could not be. Fate could not deal so rapaciously with a whole group of human beings; such unprecedented, inconceivable injustice could not have been done them. They had only experienced the great law of the universe and ought not to complain, because it is the course of the world.

But now this law had been violated in the most unparalleled manner; Abonyi had committed a heavy sin and had not atoned for it; this was a phenomenon which shook the foundations of her being, robbed her of all support, abruptly reawakened all her slumbering doubts concerning the necessity of her bitter fate, and unchained the terrible tempests in her soul, which hitherto only intense faith in the stern, but morally necessary omnipotence of the law of sin and atonement, had succeeded in soothing. Her sense of morality showed her a means of escape from this mental torture, and she did not hesitate to take it. The law of the universe must not be belied, it must prove itself in this case, as it always had; since those appointed to the office had shamefully omitted to use it, it became her right and her duty to execute it herself.

Amid these thoughts, which did not enter her mind dimly and vaguely, but with perfect clearness and distinctness, the hours passed with magical swiftness and, ere she was aware of it, the springless waggon rolled over the uneven pavement of a street in the suburbs. The noisy rattle of the wheels, which followed their former comparatively noiseless movement, and the jolts which the vehicle received in the numerous holes of the roadway quickly roused Panna from her deep reverie and brought her to a consciousness of external things.

It was about two o'clock in the morning. She asked the peasant to drive to the corner of a certain street, where the doctor whom she wanted, lived; when she reached the desired place she got out, gave her driver another florin, and said:

"Neighbour, go into a tavern and let your horses rest. You can ride home whenever you choose; I will ask the doctor to drive out in his own carriage and to take me with him; we shall get there several hours earlier with his fresh horses, than with your tired nags, which could not turn back at once."

"You're right there," replied the peasant, somewhat drowsily, bade her good-night, and drove off at a walk. In a few minutes the waggon was out of sight and hearing.

Panna now moved with rapid steps through several streets, which were alternately flooded with bright moonlight and shrouded in darkness, until she stood before the county jail. This is a barrack-like structure, whose plain front has for its sole architectural ornament two pairs of columns, which flank the main entrance on both sides. Panna entered the narrow space between the two columns at the left, and sat down with her back resting against the fluted shaft at the stone base of the pillar, whose shadow completely concealed her.

She was very weary and exhausted; the tempest of thoughts in her brain were followed by fatigue and a dull stupor; the silence, the darkness, the warmth of the shawl wrapped closely around her, the motionless position which her narrow hiding-place required, exerted a drowsy influence, and she soon

sank into a torpor which imperceptibly passed into an uneasy, agitated half slumber, visited by terrible dreams. Panna saw horrible shapes dancing around her, which grasped her with their icy hands and dragged her away; sometimes it seemed as if her brother was brought out and a bullet fired into his head; while she was trying anxiously to find the wound, it was not her brother, but Pista, who lay there with the hole in his forehead; she wailed aloud and the dead man rose, seized a brick, and dashed it on her head so that she fell bleeding; then again it seemed as though it was not she who lay on the ground in a pool of blood, but Abonyi, who still held the smoking revolver in his rigid hand; so the frightful dream faces blended in terrible, spectral changes, one horrible visage drove out another, till Panna, with a low cry of fear, suddenly started from her troubled sleep. A heavy hand had grasped her by the shoulder, and a harsh voice shouted unintelligible words into her ear.

When she opened her eyes, she saw a policeman standing before her, shaking her and asking what she was doing here. Panna was terribly startled for a moment, but she quickly regained her presence of mind, and said:

"My husband is in the jail and will be released early in the morning; so I came here to wait for him."

"Why, my dear woman, you can't stay here," replied the policeman; "find a night's lodging, and in the morning you can be here in ample time to meet your husband."

"Oh, do let me stay here, I don't know anybody in the city, where am I to go now in the night, it will surely be morning in two or three hours," pleaded Panna, at the same time drawing from her pocket a florin, one of the last she had left, which she slipped into the hand of the guardian of order. After this argument the latter evidently discovered that it would be no very serious crime if a beautiful young woman waited in front of the jail, on a warm, moon-lit night in May, for her husband's release, for, with an incomprehensible mutter, he pursued his round, on which, during the next two hours, he repeatedly passed Panna without troubling himself any farther about her.

All fatigue had now left the watcher and, after this disturbance, she did not close her eyes a second time. She was once more calm and strong, and constantly repeated in her mind that she was about to do a good, needful work, pleasing to God. The moon had set, it was growing noticeably cool, day was dawning in the east; she shivered, a slight tremor ran through her whole frame, yet she remained motionless on her stone seat. Gradually the light grew brighter and brighter, the great city gave the first signs of awakening, a few sleepy-looking people began to pass with echoing footsteps through the street, now and then a carriage drove by, the matin bells pealed from the church steeples, and the first rays of the rising sun flooded the roofs of the surrounding houses with ruddy gold. Just at that moment a carriage rolled around the corner, drove in a sharp curve to the door of the jail, and stopped. Panna pressed farther back into her niche and hid her face in her shawl. She had recognized János and an open carriage owned by Abonyi.

The driver, who had not noticed the dark figure between the pillars, sprang from his box, blanketed the steaming horses, and gave them some bags of oats. Meanwhile the door of the jail had opened, for it was five o'clock; a heiduck came out, yawning and stretching, and asked János:

"For whom are you waiting so early, Brother?"

"For my master, Herr von Abonyi, who will come presently."

"Yes, yes, you are to fetch his lordship; well, if you wish, I'll go in and tell the gentleman that you're here."

"Do, we'll get away sooner."

The man vanished inside the building and János busied himself industriously with his horses, while whistling a little song. It was not ten minutes before steps and voices were heard in the doorway. János raised his cap, called: "At your service," and sprang on the box. Two men appeared on the threshold, both looking as though they had been up all night—Abonyi and the steward.

"Cordial thanks and farewell till you see me in Kisfalú!" cried Abonyi, shaking hands with his companion.

"Good-bye until then! And in Kisfalú I'll give you revenge for the trifle you lost to-night."

"If my coachman hadn't come so early, I would have won it all back again."

"Why," said the steward, "if you feel inclined, you can come back and play on comfortably."

"Thank you, I've had quite enough of your hospitality for the present," replied Abonyi, and both laughed heartily, after which they again shook hands with each other.

The steward, who was shivering, turned back, and Abonyi prepared to get into the carriage. At the moment when he had one foot on the step and was half swinging in the air, without any firm hold, Panna sprang out, threw her whole weight upon Abonyi, dragged him to the ground with her, and, almost while falling, with the speed of lightning struck him repeatedly in the breast with a long, sharp, kitchen knife, which she had had in her bosom.

All this had been the work of a few instants. Abonyi had scarcely had time to utter a cry. János sat mute with bewilderment on the box, staring with dilated eyes at the two figures on the ground; the steward turned at the shriek and stood as though spell-bound by the spectacle which presented itself. Abonyi lay gasping, with his blood pouring from several wounds; Panna had straightened herself and, throwing down the bloody knife, stood quietly beside her victim. Instantly a great outcry arose, János sprang from the carriage and went to the assistance of his unconscious and evidently dying master, the steward rushed up to Panna and grasped her by the arm, which she permitted without resistance, a number of heiducks appeared, Panna was dragged into the doorway, and a flood of curses and threats was poured upon her. While Abonyi was carried into the guard-room under the entrance and laid on a wooden-table, where he drew his last breath before a physician could be summoned, a multitude of violent hands dragged Panna, amid fierce abuse, into the courtyard, while the steward shouted loudly:

"Lads! Bring chains for this monster! Chains I say, put irons on her hands and feet."

Then Panna who, hitherto, had not opened her lips, cried in a resonant voice, while a strange smile hovered about her quivering lips:

"Why, my dear sir, how long have you used chains? Wouldn't you rather play a game of cards with me?"

The steward's face flushed scarlet, he shrieked a few orders to his men in a shrill tone, and rushed back into the guard-room to Abonyi.

Panna was shoved rather than led down the steps of a flight of cellar stairs and thrust into a dark, stifling cell, where handcuffs were put on. During this proceeding, she made many sneering speeches:

"Give me a handsomely furnished room, too, like the one the nobleman had! And who will wait on me here?"

"Silence, witch!" cried the heiduck who was chaining her. "The executioner will wait on you when he makes you a head shorter."

"The executioner? Fool, what nonsense you are talking! No executioner will touch me. At the utmost I shall get three months imprisonment. If six months is the sentence given for the murder of an innocent man, surely one can't get more than three for killing a murderer."

At last Panna was left alone and the iron doors of her cell closed with an echoing sound. The crime naturally created the utmost excitement in the county jail; officials and employees talked of nothing else, and after learning from János who the criminal was, the opinion was generally expressed that she must be crazy. Before the examining magistrate, who was informed of the bloody deed in the course of the forenoon, gave Panna an examination, he sent a physician to see her and give an opinion of her mental condition.

The doctor found the young widow lying on the bench, deadly pale and utterly exhausted. She had spent all the power of her soul in the horrible resolve and its execution, and was now as gentle and tearful as a frightened child. She entreated the physician to have the irons taken off; she could not bear them, she would be perfectly quiet; and when he promised this she also besought him to write to her father, whose address she gave, in her place. She begged the latter's forgiveness for what she had done; she could not help it, there must be justice for gentlemen as well as for peasants. If there was no justice the world could not exist, everything would be topsy-turvy, and people would kill one another in the public streets just as the wild beasts did in the woods. She, too, would atone for the sin she had committed that day, and that would be perfectly just. She also sent a message to the gardener, thanking him for all the kindness and love which he had shown her, and hoping that he might have a happier life than Fate had allotted to her.

The physician talked with her some time longer, and received quiet, rational, somewhat timid replies. At last he went away shaking his head, evidently not knowing what to think of this singular woman, but he succeeded in having the handcuffs removed, and faithfully wrote the letter, as he had promised to do.

Panna was to be brought before the examining magistrate for the first time on the following morning. When the jailer opened the door of the cellar cell, he started back in horror. From the grating in the

little window, high up in the stone wall, dangled a rigid human form. Panna had hung herself in the night by tying the strings of her skirt together.

PRINCE AND PEASANT.

The first regiment of dragoon-guards had been waiting idly behind a screen of low bushes in a shallow hollow for more than an hour, to receive the order to advance.

It was an interesting point in the spacious battle-field of Metz, and an important period in that day of August 16th, 1870, which paved the way for the ultimate prevention of Bazaine's breaking through to Verdun. By rising in the stirrups, or ascending one of the numerous shallow ridges which intersected the meadow, a charming view appeared.

A few hundred paces in the rear lay the little village of Vionville with its slender church-steeple, from whose top floated the flag of the red cross. Several roads bordered with poplars diverged from the hamlet, crossing in straight lines the broad, undulating meadow. In the foreground was a tolerably steep declivity, which at this moment formed the boundary of the German lines. Northward and southward, as far as the eye could reach, extended a ravine several hundred feet wide, at whose bottom a little stream had worn a narrow, winding channel. The western slope was tolerably gentle, the opposite one, on the contrary, was somewhat steep. Beyond stretched a bare plain, with a few church steeples and white buildings, in the distant background. Here the French were apparently drawn up in considerable force.

On the crest of the German hill several batteries were mounted, which maintained a rapid fire with bombs. Small bodies of infantry lay on the ground a short distance in the rear of the artillery. Still farther back was the regiment of dragoons, each man with his horse's bridle wound around his arm, waiting with weary, somewhat stolid faces, for orders. The battle had evidently been at this point some time. Nearly all the enemy's shells fell into the ravine, few reached the level ground on the German side, and they, too, thus far, had effected no special injury. Only a broken gun-carriage and two or three holes in the earth which, surrounded by a loose wall of yellow clay, looked like new-made graves, lent the plain something of the character and local colouring of a battle-field. The ear had a larger share in the mighty work of the day than the eye. From the sides, the front, the rear, everywhere, cannon thundered, at a short distance on the right echoed the rattle of a sharp fire of musketry, while the terrible, ceaseless roar which filled the air alternately swelled and sank, like the rising and falling flood of melody of a vast orchestra, during the storm of the pastoral symphony.

A number of officers had assembled on a little mound in front of the regiment of dragoons, whence they were attentively watching the French. Among them a major stood smoking a cigarette and gazing dreamily into vacancy. He was a man a little under thirty, with a slender figure, somewhat above middle height, and a pale, narrow face, to which cold grey eyes, and a scornful expression resting upon the colourless lips shaded by a blond mustache inclining to red, lent a stern, by no means winning expression. In this environment of human beings, amid these excited young men with their healthful, sunburnt faces, he, with his impassive, reserved expression and somewhat listless bearing, looked strangely weary and worn. A woman's eye gazing at the group of officers would scarcely have regarded him with favour; a man's would have singled him out as the most intellectual of them all.

Removing his helmet and wiping the perspiration from his forehead with his handkerchief, he displayed a head on which the hair was already growing thin and, at the same time, a well-kept, aristocratic hand, with long, thin, bloodless fingers. His whole appearance, even in the levelling uniform, revealed a man of exalted rank. And, in fact, this officer was Prince Louis of Hochstein-Falkenburg-Gerau, the head of a non-reigning line of a German princely race.

Orphaned at an early age, he found himself at eighteen when, by the rules of his House, he attained his majority, in the unrestricted possession of a yearly income of several millions. From his mother, a very fine musician, he inherited artistic tastes and a keen appreciation of the beautiful; from his haughty and somewhat eccentric father a rugged, independent nature, which found every external constraint intolerable and wished to obey only the law of its own will.

It requires little power of imagination to picture how the world looks to the eyes of a young, immensely wealthy scion of royalty. The court treated Prince Louis with marked distinction, the ladies petted him, gentlemen showed him the most flattering attention.

Precocious, as people become in the hot-house atmosphere of aristocratic society, reflective and shy, as only children, who are reared among grown people, without intercourse with companions of their own age, almost always are, endowed, moreover, with a critical mind, which always confronted appearances sceptically and anxiously went to the bottom of everything, Prince Louis, unlike so many of his equals in rank, did not accept the tokens of consideration offered him on all sides as a matter of course, but constantly asked himself their cause. He was honest with himself and admitted that he owed his sovereign's clasp of the hand, the wooing smiles of the ladies, the cordial advances of men of rank and distinction, not to his own personality, but to his title and his wealth.

"What do they all know about me?" he often said to himself, when he returned from an entertainment at court to his splendid palace, tenanted only by servants. "Nothing! They give me no chance to open my mouth, and if everything I said to-night had been written down and laid before a man who was capable of judging, that he might give an opinion of the person who made these remarks, he could not truthfully say anything except: 'The fellow is perhaps not actually a simpleton, but does not surpass mediocrity.' Yet I am received as if I were some one of consequence. Yes, that's just it: it is not I, Louis, who am treated so, for no one would trouble himself about me, but Prince Etc." He became really jealous of "Prince Etc.," whom he regarded almost as an enemy, who supplanted and cast into the shade his own individuality, and the noble ambition entered his mind to win esteem by his personality, not by the external advantages which chance had bestowed.

But this was no easy matter. "Prince Etc." everywhere stood intrusively in his way and would allow poor "Louis" no opportunity. He went to a university, less in order to study than to steep himself for a few terms in the poetry of student life. The members of his extremely aristocratic club formed in two ranks before him when he went to their tavern, and old professors whom, hitherto, he had admired for their works, blushed with joyous emotion when he introduced himself to them, and in the class-room appeared to address him alone. He soon had enough of this, and entered the army. The colonel thanked him for the compliment which he paid the regiment by choosing it, his superior officers showed him endless marks of consideration, and if some of them affected to make no distinction between him and other young officers, he detected in it an intention which also irritated him. As, moreover, he found no special pleasure in the conversations of his comrades, nor in the parades, watchwords, and other details of garrison life, he forthwith quitted active service, not without having been promoted, in rapid succession, to first-lieutenant, captain, and major in his regiment.

Of course meanwhile woman had entered his existence. But in what a manner! Light relations with actresses, which merely occupied his senses and left no trace in his life except some considerable sums in the account book which his faithful family steward kept with great accuracy; fleeting flirtations with society ladies, which soon became intolerable because he merely found incomparably greater demands, but otherwise nothing more than with his actresses, toward whom he need use no ceremony. This was all. A great, deep love would have given his life happiness and purpose; but it did not dawn for him. Was it because he did not meet the right woman? Was it because he did not come out of himself sufficiently? was he, as it were, too much walled in by his indifference to discover, behind the reserve of maidenly timidity, faint emotions by which his own feelings might have been kindled? Enough, he passed woman by, without seeing in her aught save a toy. By accident, or to be more accurate, through the jealousy of another interest which believed itself threatened, he discovered a cleverly woven intrigue to lure him into a marriage with a princess who, though neither especially beautiful nor wealthy, was yet very pretty, and this so roused his distrust that henceforth he saw in the favour of matrons and in the smiles of young ladies only speculations upon his revenue of two millions and his title of prince, and acquired a positive abhorrence of the circles in which people marry.

Once he had a meeting which narrowly escaped making a deeper impression. On a journey from the Black Forest to Norderney the prince, who cared nothing for aristocratic isolation, occupied the same compartment with a young girl from Mayence, who was going to the same place. She was remarkably beautiful, charming, gay, and brilliant, and exerted a powerful attraction over the prince. He was extremely attentive to her during the trip, while she remained pleasantly indifferent and appeared to care nothing for him.

Perhaps this very indifference stimulated him, and he continued his attentions at the North Sea watering place, where he maintained the incognito of Herr von Gerau, the beautiful girl, who was at once surrounded by other young gentlemen, only learning from him that he was a land-owner. She accepted his daily gifts of flowers, it is true, but otherwise showed no more favour to him than to the rest of her suitors. Indeed, she paid even less consideration to the prince than to the others, which greatly depressed him. Then it happened that a very exalted personage who was a friend of Prince Louis came to Norderney. The latter was obliged to pay him a ceremonious visit on which he wore his uniform, and now could no longer conceal his rank and name. The Mayence beauty saw him in his handsome blue uniform coat, and learned that very day the identity of her admirer. Her manner to him altered as if by magic. She had eyes for him alone, distinguished him by a cordiality which justified the

boldest hopes and, by her tender looks and smiles, seemed to be imploring forgiveness for not having perceived his value sooner. Prince Louis noticed this sudden change and felt the deepest shame.

For two days good and evil fought a hard battle in his soul. His innate nobility of character urged him not to profit by his advantage, to withdraw from a person whom he had discovered to be so superficial. His bitter contempt for women whispered to carry the relation which had assumed a frivolous turn, to the doubtful end. Baseness triumphed over nobility, and let any man of twenty-four who feels that he is guiltless cast the first stone at the prince. But his evil genius farther instigated him to do something very odious. After a poetic hour, in which the Mayence beauty, amid fervid kisses, had asked whether he, her beloved one, would now be hers forever, he sent her a package which contained—his uniform, and a costly pin in the shape of a crown, accompanied by a little note stating that he gave, for her perpetual possession, all that she had loved in him.

The remembrance of this unpardonably unchivalrous act often tortured him afterwards, but his repentance by no means took the form of greater respect for women. On the contrary, he became more and more a convert to Don Juan's love—philosophy, and allowed only the millionaire and Prince Etc. to sue for favour, while the sceptical Louis grew wholly averse to the fair sex.

From early youth, he had secretly written lyric poetry, and his productions, which, it is true, were imitative rather than original, were pleasant to read and correct in form. He sent some under his own name to great weekly periodicals, and they not only appeared at once but he obtained the most flattering requests for more contributions. This afforded him much gratification, but again only for a brief time. Under the influence of his suspicious spirit of investigation, he sent several poems, with an unpretending assumed signature, to other papers. He either received no reply or curt rejections in the editors' letter-box. So he was done with that too.

He tried the "naive" life of pleasure, as he called it. With small success. Gaming soon ceased to attract him, for at the roulette table in Monaco he loathed the companionship of old professional gamblers with their gallows-bird faces, and of bedizened Paris courtesans, and at his club in Berlin or Baden, where he played only with respectable people, the stakes were never high enough to permit even the largest possible gain or loss to excite him. The pleasures of the epicure afforded him more satisfaction, and his table was famous among his peers. He soon wearied of wine; the discomfort caused by intoxication seemed to him too large a price to pay for the enjoyment of drinking. This caused his guests to banter him about his moderation, and allude to the historic drinking-horn of gigantic size, which, as the chronicles of the House attested, his ancestors used to drain at their banquets, though in those days the Burgundy was far from its present perfection, and Canary had not yet been invented. His companions' enthusiasm for drinking at last disgusted him with entertaining, and he gradually lost his taste for choice dinners also.

Once, while living on his Silesian estates, whose extent was equal to a small kingdom, he became ill, and was obliged to send for the district physician. This man, who afterwards obtained a world-wide reputation, was then young, unknown, and apparently an ordinary country doctor. The prince, however, soon perceived that he was far superior to his circumstances and position, and placed himself upon a very confidential footing with him. One day he complained of the desolation and monotony of his life and asked, in a tone between jest and earnest, what he should do with himself.

"Give your life a purpose, Prince," replied Dr. Backer, "strive for something."

Prince Louis smiled scornfully.

"For what shall I strive? Everything to which the rest of you aspire, which you are struggling with your best powers to attain, I already possess! Money? I cannot spend half my income unless I light my cigars with hundred-thaler notes, or wish to bore a hole through the earth. Women's favour? My visiting cards will obtain more than is desirable for me. Honours? At six and twenty years old, I have the grand cross of the highest orders, and have the precedence of every one except a few princes of the blood. Power? Listen, my dear Doctor: I really believe that if it suited my pleasure I could shoot a slater off the roof, and the affair would have no unpleasant results. Fame and immortality? My name is perhaps somewhat better known than Goethe's. Wherever I desire to appear, I am far more of a lion than the greatest poet and scholar, and every Prince Hochstein is sure of two lines in the encyclopaedia and larger historical works, even if he has done nothing except to be born and to die at a reasonable age. So, for what should I strive?"

"For satisfaction with yourself," replied Dr. Backer, "and that you will find only when you earn what you inherited from your ancestors, in order to possess it, as Father Goethe says."

Satisfaction with himself—certainly! But to attain it is the greatest art of life. The prince might gain it if he devoted himself earnestly, not merely in a half-absent dilettante fashion, to some art, science, or

useful avocation. Only it required a self-discipline of which, unfortunately, he was incapable. In all pursuits requiring dexterity, all sciences, the first steps are laborious, wearisome, and apparently thankless, and the Canaan which they promise is reached only after weary wandering through the desert. Prince Louis did not possess the self-denial requisite for it. So he continued his life devoted to purely external things and meanwhile was as much bored as Jonah in the whale. He undertook long journeys and disappeared for six months, during which he hunted tigers in India and hippopotami in the Blue Nile. When he returned home and was questioned at the club about his experiences and whether he had been entertained, he answered with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Entertained? As if one could be in this vale of tears! There really is nothing remarkable about a tiger-hunt. The danger and excitement concern the poor devils of Hindoos, who rouse the game. I sat in my howdah on a very quiet elephant and fired as if I were shooting at a target. Buy some big cats from Asia or Africa, put them into a cage in your park, and shoot till you kill them. It is about the same thing. True, the scenic effects are less glaring, there are fewer supernumeraries, and there is not so much shrieking and struggling on the stage. But that seems to me rather an advantage, and one doesn't have the heat and the snakes."

His hearers laughed, and an old gentleman remarked:

"You have mental colour-blindness, my dear Prince, and I should not like to have you guide the engine of my life-train."

He had hit the mark. Prince Louis saw life uniformly grey. How infinitely true are Schiller's words:

"Each mortal heart some wish, some hope, some fear,
Linked with the morrow's dawn, must cherish here
To bear the troubles with which earth is rife,
The dull monotony [Transcriber's note: monotony?] of daily life."

But Prince Louis wished, hoped, feared nothing, and when he thought of the future he beheld it in the form of a drowsy monster, yawning noisily. He longed like a languishing lover for some excitement, pursued it to the end of the world, but did not succeed in finding it.

He was just on the eve of going to Norway to hunt reindeer, when the war of 1870 broke out. In 1866 he had been in Africa and did not hear of the events of the summer until everything was over. This time he asked permission to join his regiment, the first dragoon-guards, which of course was granted. To tell the truth, he was influenced less by patriotism and enthusiasm than, in addition to propriety, the hope that military life would afford him new sensations.

Had he deceived himself this time also? It almost seemed so; for, during the fortnight which he had spent in the enemy's country, he had as yet experienced nothing unusual. When a person is attended by two capable servants, and has an unlimited amount of money at his disposal, he need suffer no discomfort even in the field, especially during a victorious advance, and as yet there had been no opportunity for individual deeds of heroism, or perilous adventures.

Thus he had again relapsed into a half-listless mood, while, as we have just seen him, he stood among his comrades in front of his regiment smoking his cigarette. Now, however, the French appeared to be advancing from the other side of the ravine. Their batteries came nearer, their shells began to fly across the gorge and strike behind the German cannon. One burst amid the division of infantry, killing and wounding several soldiers. Another demolished a gun and made havoc among those who served it. The short sharp whistle of bullets even began to mingle with the peculiar shrill wailing sound of the sugarloaf shot, and on the plateau beyond, slender lines of infantry, diverging very far apart, could be seen moving swiftly onward. They ran forward, flung themselves down, there was a succession of sudden flashes, little clouds of white smoke rose, a confusing medley of sharp, rattling reports followed, contrasting disagreeably with the deep, rolling thunder of the artillery; then the men were on their feet again, rushing on, no longer in a perfectly straight line, some in advance, others a little behind, with their faces turned towards the sun, beneath whose rays the red breeches flamed in a vivid, bloody hue, and buttons, bayonets, all polished bits of metal alternately flashed and vanished.

The force of artillery was too weak to risk an advance. The colonel who commanded the batteries ordered some shrapnels to be thrown among the advancing lines of French infantry, and was about to move his cannon a little farther back, when an aide dashed up from the right and reported that he had ridden on in advance of the 38th brigade of infantry, one regiment was close behind him, the other was marching as rapidly as possible, and would soon arrive. "Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted artillerymen, infantry, and dragoons at the top of their voices. "Hurrah! Hurrah!" came back from the distance, and a regiment of infantry, headed by a colonel and a general, advanced at a rapid march in broad, deep

columns from the poplar-bordered road across the pathless meadow. The group of officers exchanged greetings with the new arrivals, the general received reports, quickly made himself acquainted with the situation of affairs, and issued orders, signals echoed, in an instant the masses of infantry separated, lines of riflemen darted forward and hurried to the edge of the ravine, down whose slope they were seen running a few minutes later. A second and third rank followed at a short distance, and, almost ere one was aware of it, the whole regiment had poured down into the hollow.

This was the Third Westphalian regiment. It had passed so near the group of dragoon officers that Prince Louis could have distinguished every figure, every face. The poor fellows had been on their feet fourteen hours, marching steadily under the scorching August sun. A thick gray crust of dust, which perspiration had converted into an ugly mask, covered their fresh young faces. The uniforms bore marks of the clay in the various camping grounds where they had halted for a short rest. But nothing now revealed the mortal weariness of the band of heroes. Their eyes, reddened by the heat, blazed with the enthusiasm for battle, their parched throats once more gained power to shout "Hurrah!" with the full strength of their voices; their feet, which but a few minutes ago had dragged along the dusty highway with painful effort, now moved lightly and elastically, it seemed as though the whole regiment had been invigorated by some stimulating drink as it inarched into the line of fire.

The batteries roared above their heads at the French with twofold zeal, "Hurrah, Hurrah!" rose from a thousand throats in the bottom of the ravine, one could hear the roll of the drums sounding the march, and loud shouts and cries. Prince Louis watched the assailants, whose foremost ranks were already climbing the hill on the opposite side.

"Poor fellows!" he thought, "there they go to death as joyously as if it were a kirmess dance. They will shout hurrah till they are hoarse or a bullet silences them. Of what are they thinking? Probably of nothing. A blind impulse to conquer urges them on. And what does victory mean to each individual? What advantage will it be to him? How will it benefit his earthly fate, if he escapes death on the battlefield? The renown of the German name? For me perhaps it has a value. Yet it is not absolutely certain. My uniform will possibly derive a prouder lustre; but I wear it so seldom! If I go to Japan next year, perhaps the Mikado will receive me with more distinction than if I belonged to a conquered nation. Yet whether we mow down the French or they us, I think I shall always receive the same treatment at the Paris Jockey Club and the Nice Cercle de la Méditerranée. So much for me. But these obscure people below—what do they care about military fame and the power of a victorious native land? They will notice nothing of it in their villages. The tax-collector and the gendarme will be just what they were before, and that is all they see of their native country, yet they are filled with enthusiasm. The fact exists. It is as clear as noonday. We owe this to the writers who have given such beautiful pictures of our native land and military renown, and to the schoolmasters, who have instilled their words into the souls of the people. Marvellous power of language, which can incite a prosaic peasant lad to sacrifice life joyfully for an abstract idea, a fancy."

These were his thoughts,—it can neither be denied nor palliated. But while they darted clearly and swiftly through his brain, he felt a mental agitation which surprised and bewildered him. It was a strange perplexity; he felt ashamed and embarrassed; it seemed as though he had uttered his thoughts aloud, and a group of people with grave, noble faces had listened, and were now gazing at him in silence, but with mingled compassion and contempt. From inaccessible depths of his soul, into which his sober, critical, mocking reason did not shine, a mysterious voice appeared to rise, imperiously commanding his scepticism to be silent. "I am right!" reason ventured to murmur. "You are wrong!" thundered the voice from the depths. "I will not consciously permit myself to be made giddy by the dizziness of romantic self-deception!" answered reason—but now Prince Louis felt as though some stranger, from whom he must turn indignantly, was uttering the words.

The Third Westphalian covered the opposite ascent. The foremost ranks were already at the top and paused a moment, for a murderous fire greeted the first heads which appeared, and several men, mortally wounded, rolled down again. But the rest pressed on, using both hands and feet to climb the hill, whose ascent would have been mere sport for fresh youths, skilled in gymnastic exercises, but which must have seemed terribly steep to harassed, exhausted troops. As they worked their way upward with the utmost zeal, evidently striving to excel one another, Prince Louis thought of some stanzas in the Winter Tale of his favorite author, Heine:

"That lovable, worthy Westphalian race,
I ever have loved it extremely,
A nation so firm, so faithful, so true,
Ne'er given to boasting unseemly.
How proudly they stood with their lionlike hearts
In the noble science of fencing"—[1]

And with their "lion-like hearts" they reached the crest of the hill and, summoning all their remaining breath, dashed forward. But the French, comparatively unwearied and, roused to the highest pitch of combativeness by the appearance of the enemy directly in their front, threw themselves upon them in greatly superior numbers, and after a close fight, which by the front ranks of both forces was actually conducted in certain places with steel weapons, forced them back to the ravine. It was impossible to make a stand there, the poor Westphalians were obliged to wheel, and tumbled heels over head down the slope again, not without leaving a number of killed and wounded. The French were close behind and reached the bottom of the gorge almost at the same time. The Westphalians attempted to climb up the opposite side again, and then those who were left behind witnessed a heart-rending spectacle. The German soldiers were so utterly exhausted that their limbs could not carry them up the ascent, gentle as it was. They sank down in throngs as though paralysed, the muskets dropped from their nerveless hands, which no longer obeyed their will, and the French could seize hundreds of them and lead them away as prisoners, while many fell on the way and were left lying on the ground by the foe.

Meanwhile a great bustle rose. The Eighth Westphalian regiment had just come up and, while the batteries moved rapidly back toward the village in the rear, the former, led by the general in person, dashed down into the ravine to the aid of their sorely imperilled companions. The French recoiled before the shock and a large number of the prisoners were recaptured. Yet the first assault did not succeed in dislodging the foe; the French obstinately maintained their position at the foot of the opposite height, and when attacked there, amid great loss, with the bayonet, retired step by step up the scarf and again made a stand at its top. A double flank movement of the Westphalians, however, compelled them to retire somewhat quickly, and the latter, stimulated by the sight, pressed after them cheering.

But this favourable turn did not last long. During the struggle for the possession of the valley, the foe had not remained inactive. New masses of infantry were brought up, and in the distance cavalry appeared, moving slowly forward.

Prince Louis had watched the course of the battle with increasing excitement, feeling his heart alternately beat joyously with twofold rapidity and then contract in pain till it seemed to stop. The situation now seemed to him critical and, glancing around, he found the same feeling expressed in the looks and faces of the other officers. But the colonel had already beckoned to his orderly and sprung into the saddle. The trumpets sounded the first signal, a sudden movement ran through the ranks of the dragoons, in an instant all were in the saddle, sabre-sheaths clanked against stirrups, the chains and bars of the bits rattled as the horses tossed their heads, then there was a second blare of trumpets, a shrill neighing, a loud snorting, the pawing and stamping of hoofs, swords flew from their sheaths, and the troop of horsemen was in motion.

Prince Louis looked at his watch—it was half-past six o'clock. As, at the head of the first squadron, he rode a short distance behind the colonel, the aides of the regiment, and the trumpeters, a strange mood which he had never before experienced came over him. The painful excitement and quivering impatience, which, during the last half-hour, had made his veins throb to his finger-tips, merged into a joyous consciousness of purposeful activity, which restored his calmness. Now he no longer reflected and criticised. It seemed as if the doubting spirit had been driven out of him and he was obeying eagerly, confidently, and devoutly as a child a command which filled his whole being with an overwhelming desire to press forward. This man, so proud of his personality, who had always sought his happiness in the unrestricted exercise of his individuality, now felt his ego shrivel until it was imperceptible. He was only a tiny stone in a piece of mosaic, which formed a noble masterpiece only as a whole. A mighty power, call it a law of nature or the will, whose manifestation is the history of the world, had entered into and taken complete possession of him. It was not he who now directed his fate, it was decided by some unknown being outside of him. Had he been the most remarkable human being on earth, a Newton, a Goethe, nay, the Saviour Himself, he would now have weighed no more in the balance than the nameless Brandenburg farm-hand by his side, he would now have had in the mechanism of the world only the value of a dozen screws or rivets. And, strangely enough, this merging of his individuality into a whole, as a crystal of sugar dissolves in water, awakened neither discomfort nor regret. On the contrary, it was an unknown delight, which pervaded his whole frame and sent a little shiver of pleasure down his spine. He felt himself a very small personage, and yet, at the same time, a very great one, who had far outstripped the bounds of his individuality. It seemed as though he was borne helplessly on by a mighty power, and the thought entered his mind that Ganymede must have had similar sensations when he flew heavenward between the rustling pinions of the eagle. He was now experiencing the deep and mighty emotion for which he had always longed, and he had obtained it by emerging from his selfish seclusion and finding a point of connection with all mankind.

The regiment went down the slope at a walk, describing a wide curve, partly to make the descent more easily, partly to avoid the dead and wounded lying in heaps upon the ground at the bottom of the declivity. Now the horses climbed the other side in a slanting line and reached the meadow beyond. At

a signal from the trumpets, the regiment formed in two divisions which trotted forward, offering a wide front, still keeping obliquely to the left for a time, past the cheering Westphalians, and finally rushing straight upon the foe.

The thunder of the artillery in front ceased and echoed only from the distance at the right. From the opposite direction a regiment of cuirassiers came to meet the dragoons. A few hundred yards separated the front ranks of the two, and the trumpets of both regiments could be heard at the same time. The order to attack was given, and with frantic haste, the lines dashed over the resonant clay soil, which was absolutely free from dust.

It was like a scene from the legends of the Norse gods. The cuirassiers, riding straight toward the westering sun, glittered and flashed with fairy-like radiance, their shining sword-blades looked like tongues of fire, their cuirasses and helmets blazed as if they were at a white heat, their whole van was steeped in dazzling light, as though surrounded by a halo. The German dragoons had the sun directly on their backs. The long black shadows of the horses and riders dashed over the ground before them, as if the cruel shadows of death were preceding the living against the proud cuirassiers. Now the ranks met with a terrible crash. The supernaturally majestic scene was transformed in an instant into a horrible, formless chaos. Overthrown by the force of the shock, horses and riders rolled upon the earth. Masterless steeds dashed wildly in every direction, revolvers snapped, sword-blades clashed, the horses uttered short, harsh screams, the Frenchmen fought amid oaths and exclamations, the Germans, with clinched teeth, dealt blows around them, swords were buried in the bodies of enemies, without their owners clearly seeing what they were doing, single pairs of foes, hacking furiously at each other, were suddenly separated by a movement of their horses and brought in front of new antagonists, only to find themselves the next moment again in a dense throng, thigh pressing against thigh, arms firmly pinioned, panting into each other's faces, while the rearing horses tried to bite one another. This frenzied medley lasted perhaps two, perhaps three, minutes. In spite of the irregular swaying to and fro of the mass, the dragoons had constantly advanced, and now the cuirassiers suddenly wheeled their horses and, bending low in their saddles, dashed off in a stretching gallop. An exultant "Hurrah!" burst like a peal of thunder from the breasts of the terribly excited dragoons, and their steeds, with the blood dripping from their torn flanks, their chests covered with flakes of foam, continued their victorious race, while on the field behind lay hundreds of French and Germans, dead and wounded.

Signals, shouts, and the waving of sabres gradually slackened the onward rush of the conquerors and brought them to a halt on the brink of a narrow stream. It seemed to Prince Louis like waking from a dream, as he patted the neck of his gallant horse and, panting for breath, gazed around him. On the opposite side batteries were seen moving rapidly away, the remnants of the cuirassier regiment were following the artillery, and in the distance, on both sides, columns of infantry were hurrying back, not without pouring upon the dragoons, during the retreat, an irregular and ineffective fire.

"Strange," said a very young lieutenant beside the prince, showing him his sword, "half the blade is covered with blood, and cannot have received the stain except in a Frenchman's body. Yet I cannot recall how it happened."

Prince Louis was about to answer, when he suddenly received a tremendous thrust in the breast, as if dealt by the hand of an invisible giant or the tip of a bull's horn, and, with a low cry, he pressed his hand upon the painful spot. He withdrew it stained with blood, and could just grasp the thought that a bullet had pierced him ere his senses failed.

When he regained his consciousness, he found himself lying on the trampled turf with his head resting on a saddle. His coat was unbuttoned and a number of his comrades were busying themselves about him. He felt no pain, only an inexpressible weariness and a strange, almost indescribable feeling, something like an internal trickling, which appeared to be rising into his throat and forced him to struggle for breath like a drowning man.

"How do you feel, Prince?" asked the lieutenant-colonel, bending anxiously over him.

"I feel," he answered softly, "as if I ought to shout: Long live the king! Long live our native land!" Then, after a brief pause, he added almost inaudibly, while a barely perceptible smile flickered over his white lips: "But I certainly am not at a public meeting."

These were his last words.

[1] English translation.

THE ART OF GROWING OLD.

Baron Robert von Linden was standing between the panels of his triple mirror. The sunlight of a bright May morning was streaming upon him through the lofty window so brilliantly that it made the places which it illumined almost transparent. He put his face very close to the crystal surface, so that it nearly touched and he was obliged to hold his breath in order not to dim it, examining his reflected image a long time, with a scrutiny which at once seeks and fears discoveries, looked at himself in front, then from the side, changed the light, sometimes bringing his face under the full radiance of the sunshine, sometimes receiving it at different angles or shading himself slightly with his hand. At last, sighing heavily, he stepped back, laid the tortoise-shell comb and ivory brush on the marble washstand, sank into the arm-chair standing in the corner, and bowed his head on his breast, while his arms hung at full length as if nerveless.

Alas! the hour when he made his morning toilet was no longer a happy one for Baron Robert. He dreaded the inexorable mirror, and yet self-torturing curiosity impelled him to inspect his face with the keen observation of a Holbein. Not even the least deterioration in his appearance escaped his search and scrutiny. He perceived and examined all the ravages which life had made in his exterior: the lines crossing the brow, the little wrinkles extending from the corners of the eyes toward the temples, the deep ones, as well as those which seemed, as it were, lightly sketched with a faint stroke to be more strongly marked later, and which were now visible only in a side-light, the creased appearance of the lower eyelids and the space between the inner corners of the eyes and the bridge of the nose, the granulated condition of the smoothly shaven cheeks, which resembled the peel of ripe oranges or fine Morocco leather; the flabbiness of the narrow strip of skin between the edge of the beard and the ears, which looked as if it had been lightly powdered with greyish-yellow dust; the pallor near the cheek-bone, which was as colourless and withered as a dead tea-rose leaf. He counted the white hairs already visible on the temples—he pulled out the ones in the moustache—let the sunbeams play over his hair and, turning and bending his head, saw that it was growing thinner and, from the brow to the crown, showed the smooth scalp shining through. The investigation lasted a long while, he performed it with cruel thoroughness, locking himself into his room meanwhile, since he would not allow even his valet to be a witness of the painful discoveries of which he believed that he alone was aware.

Perhaps he was not mistaken in this comforting supposition. His appearance as a whole was still handsome and stately. Time had not marred the lines of his slender figure, no increase of flesh enlarged his girth, no weakness made his shoulders droop and rounded his back, and when dressed with exquisite taste, and carrying his head proudly erect, he walked with a light, elastic step through the streets or across the carpet of a drawing-room, he would have been taken at a distance, or if one was a little near-sighted, not only for a handsome man, but even for one still young.

He said this to himself when, after a few minutes of discouragement, he rose from the arm-chair, hastily completed his toilet, and again looked at the whole effect in the mirror, this time not close at hand, but from a distance of several paces.

Some one knocked at the door. "The doctor," said the servant's voice.

"I'm coming," replied Baron Robert, hastening to open the door and enter the adjoining drawing-room, where Dr. Thiel was awaiting him. He came regularly one morning every week to see the baron before the latter went out; for Baron Robert was a little anxious about his health, and liked to be told by the physician, who was also his friend, that certain trifling symptoms—great thirst on a hot day, slight fatigue after a ball, a little heaviness in his limbs after a long walk, were of no importance.

"Well, how are you to-day?" cried Dr. Thiel, rising to meet him.

"Fairly well," replied Linden, clasping both his hands.

"Yet, surely you look rather downcast?" asked the physician.

"For good reasons," answered Linden sighing.

"What is the matter now? Have you no appetite after eating? Do you feel more tired at midnight than in the morning?"

"Don't ridicule me. You don't know what day this is."

Thiel looked at him inquiringly.

"My birthday," said Linden mournfully.

"Why, to be sure," cried Thiel, "let me see, what one is it?"

"No number," interrupted Linden quickly, covering his friend's mouth with his hand.

"You're worse than a coquette," remarked Thiel, pushing his hand away. He had had "an old coquette" on the tip of his tongue, but suppressed the adjective. "A man can speak of his age without regret, when he is only in the mid-forties."

"Not yet the middle, I beg of you," Linden eagerly protested, "I am forty-four years old to-day."

Thiel smiled. "Well, I wish you many happy——"

Linden did not let him finish. "Happiness! Happiness! Is there any happiness after youth is over?"

"Everything depends upon what is meant by happiness."

Linden did not seem to hear what Thiel was saying, but pursued his own train of thought. "How futile your science is! You find a bacillus here, a ptomain there. What use is that to me? None! Teach me how to keep young forever, then I shall have some respect for your staring into your beloved microscope. The ancients alone were right in that, as in everything else. To die young. In undiminished vigour. The gods can bestow no greater happiness. What is there to seek in life when youth has fled?"

"Nothing, of course, if, like a drone, we have but a single task in existence: to live. A drone must die, when it has performed its mission. I am not at all blind to the beauty of the butterfly, which lets its magnificent velvet wings glisten in the sunshine throughout a long summer day, and has no organs for receiving nourishment, but does nothing except hover around flowers and the females of his species, wooing and loving, and dies in the evening without ever waking from his ecstasy of delight. It is the same thing with the flower. It blooms, exhales its fragrance, displays beautiful forms and colours merely for the purpose of propagation, withering quickly when that purpose is attained. The butterfly and the flower are both beautiful. Yet, after all, they are inferior forms of life, and man is higher, though he does not exhale fragrance and usually possesses no velvet wings."

"Is it so absolutely certain that man is superior? For my part I envy the butterfly and the flower, which perish in the full glory of youth, beauty, and love. That is the way I have always imagined an existence worth living. A dazzling display of fireworks. A sudden flashing, flaming, crackling, and detonating amid the darkness. A triumphant ascent of glittering balls and serpents, before whose splendid hues the stars of heaven pale. At every rain of fire and explosion, a rapturous, ah! and a thunder of applause from the gaping Philistines, who are in a tumult of ecstasy at the sight, and thus, without cessation, have flash follow flash, and report report, in a continual increase of magnificence, until the closing piece on whose marvellous splendour darkness must fall with no transition. That is life. That is happiness. But the rockets must always be fully charged. Otherwise they will not fly upward amid universal admiration to the stars, but fizz a little, hop up with ridiculous effort, fall plump, and go out pitifully in a malodorous smoke. A dismal end."

Robert was silent a moment, evidently pursuing his picture in his mind. Then, as if it were the final result of his train of thought, he added:

"Yes, Doctor, if you could only put a fresh charge into a half-exploded rocket."

The doctor smiled.

"To remain always young, we need only do at every age what harmonises with it."

Linden looked disappointed. But Thiel, without allowing himself to be disturbed by it, continued:

"Are you not young at twenty? Well, play with a humming-top in the streets at that age, and every one who passes will exclaim: 'What an old clown! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?' At fifty you consider yourself old. If, at fifty, you are a commander-in-chief or a chancellor, everybody will say: 'So young a general; a minister so young!'"

Linden rose and went to the window. Thiel followed, laid his hand on his shoulder, looked him directly in the eye, and said very earnestly:

"Believe me, dear Baron Linden, that is the secret of perpetual youth—there is no other. A man in the forties is not old—unless he cannot resolve to give up the conceits of a page."

"Always the same song!" Linden impatiently exclaimed. "Must I renounce love?"

"Yes," replied Thiel firmly.

"I must voluntarily renounce happiness?"

"In your case love is not always synonymous with happiness," said Thiel with a significant smile.

"You are particularly agreeable to-day," remarked Linden sullenly.

"I owe you the truth. It is a professional and, at the same time, a friendly duty," said Thiel, rising to go. Linden parted from him with a silent clasp of the hand.

"Renounce love! No. That he really could not do. Love was the sole purpose of his life which, without it, would seem as cold and gloomy as a grave."

He was a chosen vessel of pleasure, and apparently destined by nature to be borne through life in women's arms, handsome, captivating, a flash of passion in his tender eyes, his lips yearning for kisses, regarded by the men with wrath and envy, by the women with glowing cheeks and bewildered hearts. When barely a youth, a page of the Grand Duchess, his attractive person and winning grace turned the heads of all the ladies of the court, and it was rumoured that a princess had been his first teacher in the arts of love and, even after decades had passed, still grieved over their memory. As the Hereditary Grand Duke's adjutant, he had scarcely anything to do except to continue to compose his long love-poem, and add verse after verse. At thirty he resigned from active service, which had never been active for him, and became manager of the court stage. His brief love-conflicts and easy victories now had another scene for display. After the society of the court the dramatic arts: dancing, singing, acting without choice, or rather with the choice induced by the desire for beauty, and—change. The years elapsed like a series of pictures from the fairy-tale of Prince Charming. They formed a frieze of bewitching groups in all the attitudes which express wooing and granting, languishing and triumphing. Each year was a Decameron, each month a sensuous Florentine tale, with a woman's name for title and contents. What a retrospect! His past life resembled a dream whose details blended indistinctly with one another, leaving only a confused recollection of sighs, kisses, and tears, melting eyes, half-parted lips, and loosened tresses, a memory as deliciously soft as a warm, perfumed bath, in whose caressing waters, in a chamber lit by a rose-hued lamp, one almost dissolves, and yields with thoughts half merging into slumber.

But the dream seemed to be drawing to a close. Of late a cold hand had touched Baron Robert, at first considerately, then more and more imperiously, to rouse him. He could no longer shut his eyes and ears to the signs and warnings: for they daily became plainer and more frequent, not merely in his mirror, but also in the unintentionally cruel words of the world, that other still more inconsiderate mirror. The pretty ingenue of his theatre, one of his last conquests, had recently after a private supper, while sitting on his knee and stroking his face, said to him with overflowing tenderness:

"What a wonderfully handsome man you must have been!"

He had thrust her from him like a viper with so hasty a movement that the poor girl hardly knew what had happened. She did not suspect that she had thrust a dagger into the heart of the man she loved. At balls, young girls now, after a rapid waltz, whispered, blushing: "I am afraid you are tired," and in the German other partners, who were neither so handsome nor so elegant as he, but young and lively, attracted more attention from the ladies and obtained more favours. And had not a young attaché a short time ago, in reply to the remark that he preferred a sensible conversation with experienced men to any other social pleasure, said with thoughtless impertinence; "Of course, at your age—" He would have boxed his ears, if any lady had been within hearing.

Such frank expressions, which even sensitive people did not avoid, because they did not yet deem him in need of forbearance, caused a degree of depression which, on some days, became actual melancholy. Then he sought a consoling self-deception in memory, and lost himself in dreams of the past, as a proud, brave nation, which has suffered defeat, takes refuge in the history of its former victories, to sustain itself. Shut into his study for hours he again lived over his triumphs, surrounded by their testimonials. He placed before him pictures of himself, taken at different ages. This bewitching page with his smooth, merry face, clad in dainty knee-breeches with bows and a silk doublet, this handsome lieutenant with the downy moustache and the bold, laughing glance, were images of him; he had looked thus, perhaps even better; for he remembered that the likeness, when taken, did not satisfy him, and that everybody thought he was really far handsomer. He opened secret drawers, which exhaled an ungodly perfume, very faint, almost imperceptible, like a faded, ghostly odour, yet which excited the nerves in a peculiar way, and somewhat quickened the pulsation of the heart. These were the archives of the history of his own heart. There lay in piles packages of letters, methodically tied with coloured ribbons, withered flowers, whose leaves fell from the corona if touched ever so lightly, faded bows, torn laces, which still seemed to palpitate under the rude grasp of a hand rummaging among them, paper German favours, from which the gloss and gilding had peeled, other shapeless, disconnected bits of tinsel which were incomprehensible unless one knew the memory associated with them, and among the

strange, motley chaos, the most personal mementoes: women's hair smooth, curled, braided, long, and short, arranged by a true eye, with scandalously cool composure, upon a pale lilac varnished board, in a wonderful scale of colours, from the highest pitch, the fair locks of the Englishwoman, resembling a delicate halo, through almost imperceptible gradations to the deep, shining blue-black of the Sicilian, and portraits in every form which fashion has devised during the last twenty-five years, and from which the eternal feminine looked, lured, and smiled in a hundred charming embodiments. A circle of spectres rose from these drawers and whirled around him, stretching white arms toward him and fixing upon him tearful or glowing eyes. All these cheeks had flushed beneath his kisses, all these bosoms had been pressed to his own, all these tresses his trembling fingers had smoothed, surely he might call himself happier than most mortals, since so much of love's bliss had filled all the hours of his existence.

Doubtless he did say this to himself after such revelling in the past, but in his inmost heart he did not believe it. Don Juan does not peruse the list of the thousand and three himself. He leaves it to Leporello while he, without a glance at the older names, increases the succession. The day when the cavalier begins to study his list, his wisest course would be to burn it, for then it will no longer be a triumph, but a humiliation.

Robert von Linden felt this, but he would not admit it. On the contrary, he intentionally endeavoured to deceive himself. He who had been a Grand Seigneur of love, became a snob of love. He sank to the level of the irresistible travelling salesman who tells the tale of his successes in foreign taverns. He had always left drawing-room gossip to spread his reputation with its thousand tongues and, by the mere mention of his name, fill maids and matrons with an exciting mixture of timid fear and eager yearning, indignant pride and tender pity. Now a torturing anxiety beset him lest his great deeds might be forgotten, and he humbled himself to the character of bard of his own epic poem. He told his last conquests who, naturally, with self-torturing curiosity inquired about it, chapter after chapter of the romance of his heart, half-opened his famous drawers and permitted them to catch a glimpse of letters, likenesses, and locks of hair; he strove to soothe his self-esteem by showing what passions he had inspired, at the risk of having his fair listener, with a secret smile, imagine exaggeration where, in reality, he was merely boasting.

Such was his mental condition at this time. He had toilsomely erected a sort of sham paradise of stage scenery, in which he continued to play the character of the youthful lover, which he was scarcely entitled to continue in life, and now this luckless doctor, with a careless movement, had thrown down all the painted canvasses with their artificial scenes.

Thiel's brutal remark: "You must renounce love," was still echoing painfully in his soul when he entered the home of Frau von der Lehde, with whom according to old habit, he dined once a week.

Else von der Lehde was a year or two older than he. She had been maid of honor to the princess, when Robert was a page. She had loved him deeply, fervently, and received a little responsive affection in return. But that was already so far back in the past. It was a distant memory, suffused with the rosy light of dawn, associated with all the new, fresh feelings of her life, youth, the awakening of her heart, first love, jealousy, and torment. The little idyl, in its day, was noticed by every one, but people were disposed to regard it as harmless, and Else herself afterward strove to see it in the same light, though she was well aware of its real condition. Still, a beardless boy of eighteen could not seriously compromise a young lady of twenty, who had been in society three winters. He was so far from doing so, that the whispers and smiles of this society did not prevent her becoming the wife of President von der Lehde who, after fifteen years of wedded life, left her a childless widow in the most pleasant circumstances. Else had never ceased to be completely enthralled by Robert. During her husband's lifetime, she had imagined that it was friendship, sisterly, almost maternal friendship. When Herr von der Lehde died, she no longer had any motive for playing a farce with her own conscience, and she told Robert plainly that she expected him now to marry her. He was very much surprised and even slightly amused. Thirty-three years old, at the zenith of his success, living actually in the midst of a flickering blaze of ardent love, he had the feeling that it was a very comical idea for a woman who was his elder, with whom for a decade and a half he had lived on terms of wholly unobjectionable friendship, and whom he had often unhesitatingly made the confidante of his love-affairs, suddenly to wish him to marry her. To return after the lapse of fifteen years to a dish which he had once tasted with the eagerness of a greedy boy! This was not to be expected. Love permits no Rip van Winkle adventures. It cannot be taken up where it was interrupted a generation before. Its drama, whether it is to close as comedy or tragedy, must be played without long intermissions in a continuous performance to the end, in order not to become intolerably tiresome and foolish.

Robert did not conceal this from Else, though he endeavoured to find softening expressions. But oratorical caution does not deceive a woman who is in love. Else was very unhappy over the rebuff. Her passion, however, was stronger than her pride, and she humbled herself to entreaties, persuasions, persistent pleading. Robert, to whom the situation was becoming extremely uncomfortable, ceased to

call upon the irritated and excited woman and, as Mahomet showed himself unhesitatingly ready to come to the mountain when the mountain did not come to Mahomet, Robert refused to see his persecutor. For a time Frau von der Lehde was filled with the most bitter resentment against the man who disdained her. She had worked herself up into the idea that he owed her expiation, if not before the world, surely before her own conscience, and it seemed to her dishonourable that he should evade his duty. But her indignation did not last. She could no longer live without Robert, and as he quietly left her to sulk and did not make the slightest attempt to conciliate her, after several sleepless nights she one day wrote a little note in which she gently reproached him for so culpably neglecting her, and expressed the hope that he would dine with her the next day, and by his own observation, convince himself that her grief for his long absence was really injuring her looks. How wearily she had striven to prevent letting a tear fall upon the tinted paper, what heroic courage she had expended in finding sportive turns of speech, subdued, even mirthful expressions, could not be perceived in the little missive. Robert read it with distrust, but, in spite of the most cautious scrutiny, he did not find a single word whose vehemence could disquiet him, not a single letter which was nervously emphasized or written, or betrayed a trembling hand, so he accepted the invitation.

Frau von der Lehde made no mistake. Her self-control did not desert her a moment. She received Robert calmly and affectionately, as though nothing had occurred between them, the dinner passed delightfully in easy, gay conversation about all sorts of indifferent matters, and when he was leaving she held out both hands and said, looking directly into his eyes:

"Tuesday, at least, shall again be mine in future, shall it not?"

He kissed her hand, touched by such unselfish, faithful devotion.

It was a strange relation which, from that time, existed unshadowed between these two for more than a decade. Else surrounded Robert with an atmosphere of warm, unvarying tenderness which, though perhaps only from habit, she understood how to render a necessity of his life. She insisted upon being the confidant of all his feelings; no outburst of anger ever betrayed what she experienced during his confessions, not even a sorrowful quiver of the features ever reminded him to be on his guard; she possessed inexhaustible indulgence for his frivolities, earnest sympathy for his fleeting love-sorrows, hateful or ridiculous as they usually appeared to an uninterested witness, counsel and comfort when an adventure took an unpleasant turn, and she was satisfied if, in an ebullition of gratitude, he then pressed her to his heart, kissed her hands and her cheeks, and assured her that she was the dearest, noblest, and most lovable woman whom he had ever known. But when she played this rôle of a feminine providence, who was apparently free from the ordinary weaknesses of her sex, when she carefully repressed every emotion of jealousy at the sight of his inconstancy, she was not free from a selfish motive. She still hoped that some day he would grow weary of pursuing the blue will-o'-the-wisps of fleeting sham loves; he would at last long to escape from the marsh into which for decades these capricious, alluring, fleeting flames had deluded him, and would then unresistingly allow himself to be led by her hand to the firm ground of a tried affection, in order, even though not until the evening twilight of his days, to rest with her, at last her own Robert, whom she need share with no one.

When Linden, on this Tuesday, appeared at Frau von der Lehde's, she of course instantly noticed his depression, and with her usual sympathy and gentle tenderness, asked:

"Why are you so melancholy, Robert? What has happened?"

"Melancholy?" forcing himself to a wan smile. "I feel nothing of the sort."

"Yes, Robert; do you suppose that I do not know the meaning of these lines on the forehead and between the eyes?"

Oh, those lines! Surely he knew them, too, he had studied them this very morning with painful attention, but why need she obtrude them upon him? This was unkind, almost malicious. He released her hand, which he had held in his own since his entrance, and silently went to an arm-chair. She followed, took a seat on a stool at his feet, and said caressingly:

"How long has Robert had secrets from Else? May I not know everything? Has one of my sex again proved faithless? Ah, dearest Robert, so few of us are worth having people trouble themselves about us."

"That isn't it at all," Robert answered curtly.

"What is it, then?"

Robert remained silent a short time, then, averting his eyes from her questioning gaze, said:

"This is my birthday."

"You don't suppose that I could forget it? But certainly you do not wish to be congratulated upon it, to have it mentioned?"

Robert laid his hand upon her lips, murmuring:

"Yet I cannot forget your thinking of it, as I see."

A pause ensued, and he had the unpleasant feeling that his ostrich method of shunning the sight of a disagreeable fact, must appear very ridiculous.

"Well, and why does your birthday make you melancholy?" asked Else, kissing his hand as she removed it from her mouth.

"A woman ought to feel that, without any explanation from me."

"It isn't the same thing, dear Robert. But I don't philosophize about the distinction. At any rate a woman dreads her birthday only because she is afraid of growing old, and there can be no question of that with you. At your age a man is not old."

She smiled so strangely, as she said this. Or did it merely seem so to Robert?

"Well, in any case Doctor Thiel is not of your opinion. He was as disagreeable as a scrubbing-brush to-day. He gave me a serious moral lecture with firstly, secondly, thirdly, and closed with an admonition that I must play the dare-devil no longer, or to be more explicit, must renounce love. That seemed to me very much wanting in taste."

"Indeed, Thiel told you that?" She had suddenly become extremely earnest and attentive.

"Yes. And I consider that he entirely mistakes his vocation. When I want preaching I'll apply to the theological faculty. From the medical profession I expect strengthening. Thiel seems to confound salve with sanctity. That is not treatment."

The servant announced dinner, and both went to the table. Else almost always arranged to be alone with Robert on Tuesday.

"I think," she said, when they were seated opposite to each other, "that you ought not to take Thiel's words lightly. He is your friend. And," she added hesitatingly, as Robert did not answer, "he is right."

"You say that, too?" he exclaimed, indignantly.

"Yes, dear, dear Robert, yes. I should not have ventured to say it first and alone. You might have considered it rude and selfish. You cannot think so in Thiel. When he says to you: Stop!—it is not obtrusive. Since I am merely repeating his view, I have the courage to confess that it has been for a long time my own opinion."

"A long time! That is more and more pleasing."

Frau von der Lehde hesitated a moment. The phrase was really not well chosen. But the words could not be recalled, so she bravely continued, growing warmer, more urgent, the longer she spoke.

"Robert, I repeat, Thiel is right. It is time for you to think of your own happiness. You have bestowed much joy in your life, and, it is true, also caused much sorrow, probably far more sorrow than joy, but you have not been happy yourself. No, no, do not try to impose upon me. You have not been happy. You might have been so, you have come near happiness countless times, but you have always passed it by. You have lived in a constant state of intoxication, and intoxication is always followed by illness, to escape which you have sought intoxication anew. Robert, you must feel a loathing of such a life. Women admire or fear you, men envy or abhor you, but how does it aid you? It cannot make you happier. You possess great talents. I, who know you as you perhaps do not know yourself, am conscious of it, and can prove it. You had the capacity for everything. You only needed to choose, and you might have been a great poet, a great musician, a great artist, a great statesman. And what have you done with all your brilliant gifts? Used them as men use mirrors to catch larks, to dazzle silly women."

Robert had listened silently and looked out of the window. Here he interrupted her. "To shape one's own life harmoniously is also an art, perhaps the greatest. Whoever makes his life a work of art needs to create nothing else, and has rightly used his talents."

"But that is exactly what I do not see," cried Else, "the art-production of your life. Where is the

climax, where the harmonious close? Is it aesthetic, is it dignified to pay court to frivolous actresses and ballet-dancers, and treat the cheap triumph, before and after, as though it were something important? Does not this humiliate a man of intellect in his own eyes? And even if——"

She suppressed what she was going to say, and with a sudden digression, continued:

"Robert, understand at last that happiness is repose. You have had passion and excitement enough. It is time for you to know something else; deep and equable as a clear summer evening, without storm and tempest. And you know where to find such love. Ah, Robert, no one on earth ever loved you as I have, not one of the women on whom you have squandered your heart, your intellect, your health. As a girl I sacrificed for you my pride and my celebrated beauty. You were my first passion, and you have remained the sun of my existence. As a young widow I threw myself at your head. You would not accept me. Perhaps to your detriment. But that is no consolation. I have forced myself to be your sister, in order to possess you a little, ah so little. Let me at last be more to you, Robert. Thiel tells you that you must love no longer. But you may still allow yourself to be loved. Robert, suffer yourself to be loved. That is all I ask. Let me be your wife, let me prepare a home for you. I shall be envied, I shall be proud of you, and repay you with a fidelity and tenderness which no woman can now give you. Consider, Robert, to me you are still the young Greek god of eighteen, whom I loved a generation ago so that it nearly cost my life. Is there any other woman who sees you with such eyes? Speak, Robert."

Robert did speak. He spoke with quiet friendliness. He was certainly very grateful to her for her feelings. He returned them with all his heart, as she knew. But why change a relation in which both had been so comfortable for a generation. It was a delightful emotion to know that, while outwardly free, they were secretly united by warm friendship. This bond would not oppress. The fetters of a regular Philistine marriage would probably burden them, and, after all, it would not be morally so beautiful and so strong as a daily desired and renewed companionship. He, for his part, at any rate, would desire nothing better than the endless continuance of their present relations.

Else was not satisfied. She continued to try to persuade and convince him. She became excited, Robert remained calm. She entreated, he grew morose and taciturn. Scarcely waiting for the coffee, which he swallowed as swiftly as the warmth of the fragrant beverage permitted, he left Else immediately on some slight pretext.

Far from softening him, Else's eager words had made him indignant, almost incensed. This was certainly an attempt to take him by surprise. For a moment the suspicion even awoke that Thiel was in league with Frau von der Lehde, his warning, her demand were arranged, a preconcerted attack had been executed on both sides. True, he did not dwell long upon this thought, whose improbability he himself soon perceived, but he mentally repeated Frau von der Lehde's words again and again. No other woman saw him with eyes like hers! How did she know that? No woman on earth loved him as she did? What if he should show her the contrary? He must no longer love, only permit himself to be loved! This advice did not displease him. In fact perhaps it was sensible to direct a wild life full of adventures which, in reality, were meaningless, monotonous, and profoundly unsatisfying, into the channels of a regulation domestic existence. But if he himself decided to bring it to a close, it should not be the end which Else wished to force upon him.

The more deeply he entered into the idea of the late marriage with Else, the more angry it made him. What presumption in this woman, who was years his senior! Did she really believe that he, according to her own estimation a man in the prime of life, had no other claims upon existence than to possess a home, in other words to have a housekeeper, who would make him soups, and a nurse who would wrap his rheumatic limbs in cotton wool. Deuce take it, he was by no means such an invalid. He was still sailing erect, before the wind, with swelling canvas and fluttering streamers. He was no hulk of which wreckers might take possession. If he no longer desired to remain on the high seas, at least he could freely choose the harbour where he preferred to cast anchor.

He mentally reviewed the images of the women who had recently made an impression upon him, or on whom he was sure that he had produced an impression, and asked himself with which of them he could probably spend a life of constant intercourse. Always is a long time, and he knew that a woman must possess remarkable qualities not to repel him in the long run. He had a peculiar method of testing whether a woman was suited to be his companion for life, and whether he could endure to have her continually with him. He imagined that he was taking a wedding journey with a wife through Italy, was alone with her six weeks, without any other society, with no stimulus except her presence, and he pictured these days in every detail. Several apparently thoroughly charming women were in this way instantly rejected. One was beautiful and desirable, but stupid as a pike, and he could not help laughing when, in fancy, he saw himself standing with her before the works of art in Florence and heard her remarks about paintings and statues. Another was clever, but she talked too much. One could spend an hour with her pleasantly, but a whole day, a whole week—brrr!

This one, after a few days, would long to return to her circle of admirers and rivals, and under the dome of St. Peter's dream of the court entertainments, adorers, and society gossip; that one, with her prosaic nature, would transform the blue grotto of Capri into the office of a chief auditor. Others stood the test better, but even with them doubts arose, which grew stronger the more he thought of them. Perhaps he could endure a week, a fortnight, with them. But six weeks, two months? No. By that time they would surely have become indifferent, perhaps intolerable. They would certainly have nothing more to offer him, he nothing more to say to them.

In the proportion in which other women's images faded and vanished, one stood forth more and more clearly, and finally filled his whole mental field of vision. Fräulein von Markwald—yes, with her the adventure might be risked. She was as beautiful as any fair one whose likeness he had kept in his love archives; a tall, proud figure, large dark-blue eyes which evidently dreamed of love behind their long, shading lashes, and often seemed to wake from this ardent trance of bliss with a sudden upward glance, blooming lips for which many a godly man would have relinquished his soul's salvation without hesitation, an unusually fair complexion with satiny reflections, and a really regal coronal of rich golden hair—all in all a magnificent creature, such as Nature does not often create. This was a prize for which the best man might strive. That he would ever weary of her, Linden could not now imagine. When he fancied that she was leaning on his arm, walking with the light, floating step peculiar to her along the Chiaja, or the Lung Arno, or that he was sitting with her on the shore of Viarreggio and she leaned her head upon his breast, it seemed as if palaces, sky, and sea would shine brighter than of yore as it were in vivified colours. True, Fräulein von Markwald was not yet twenty, and he might be her father. But need he hesitate on that score? At the utmost the difference in age could only disturb her, and it did not. To him her nineteen years were but one charm; the more perhaps the most powerful of her attractions. In her radiant, vigorous youth, he might hope to rejuvenate himself. How had he been so blind as not to perceive it weeks ago! How could he have waited until Thiel's harsh warning and Else's importunity thrust him into the right path?

Of course it had not escaped the notice of an old practitioner like him that he had made an impression upon Fräulein von Markwald. The blood which mounted into her cheeks when he approached and spoke to her, the unconsciously seeking glance with which she followed him when he went away, the tone of assumed jest, but genuine reproach, with which she asked if he had selected another poor victim, when he had talked with another lady somewhat longer or somewhat more earnestly than usual, were traitors which but too officiously revealed the secret of her heart. She did not even defend herself. She had been too short a time at court and in society to be versed in the strategic arts of love or coquetry. Almost in their first conversation she had confessed, with charming frankness, that everybody was warning her against him, she had been told that he was an extremely dangerous man, she was really a little afraid of him; but a certain slight shiver in the presence of a handsome monster was a new and strangely delightful feeling. There was no doubt that his legendary adventures had exerted the customary bewitching influence upon her imagination. The daughter of Eve felt the irresistible hereditary attraction toward the serpent which had already talked so many feebly resisting hands into plucking the fatal apple. Hitherto, Robert had not wished to avail himself of his advantage. He had been content with the pleasantly piquant consciousness that his presence made her heart throb faster, and did not pursue the dawning romance farther, for Fräulein von Markwald belonged to one of the best families in the country, and he now thought of the respect due to the unsullied reputation of a young girl—he was somewhat less reckless than ten years ago. But now there should be a change. Since he had serious intentions he need not shrink from using all means to complete the conquest of this fortress, which, moreover, was already on the point of raising the white flag.

He did not lose a moment. All the evening he was seen in the little court box, devoting himself most assiduously to Fräulein von Markwald, and this was afterward repeated at every performance. Whenever the princess gave an evening reception, he seemed to care only for the beautiful girl, and was always behind or beside her, serving her, talking with her, offering her his arm, tenderly solicitous about her on her arrival and departure. The whole court began to watch and to whisper, and Linden's love-making became so apparent, that the princess thought it necessary to warn Käthe against the tempter and his wiles. Fräulein Markwald answered blushing, but in a steady voice:

"I thank you, Your Highness, I know that your advice is kindly meant, but I also know that Baron von Linden is a man of honour, and that I have given him no reason, to think meanly of me."

This answer seemed to the princess wholly unsatisfactory, and as she believed it her duty to take special care of Käthe, an orphan, she did not delay in cautiously calling Robert himself to account. What he said to her the princess kept to herself for a time, but two days later people learned that Käthe's brother, an energetic cavalry officer, attached to a regiment of Hussars in the Rhine country, had suddenly arrived in the capital from his garrison, and on the following day, which was Whitsuntide, the "Morning Journal" announced the betrothal of Herr Robert, Baron von Linden, to Fräulein Käthe

von Markwald.

The effect of the news on society was like the bursting of a dynamite cartridge before every individual. Linden capitulated! Linden married! It was incredible. And to whom had he struck the bold corsair flag which had so long been the terror of husbands? To Käthe von Markwald, in whom nothing piquant could be discovered which would be likely specially to attract a blasé man of the world! She was beautiful, certainly, but he had passed by many handsomer women. She was not stupid, but how many cleverer fair ones, with all their craft, had been unable to hold him in their nets! The event was and remained incomprehensible, it might be—

Frau von der Lehde had sent for Dr. Thiel on Whitsuntide morning, and when he entered, silently held out the newspaper.

"I know it already," he answered smiling.

"Do you believe that it is true?"

"Of course it is true. The announcement is signed by the betrothed pair. Besides, Linden told me the news himself."

"Did he ask your advice?"

"No; he merely told me the accomplished fact."

Frau von der Lehde crushed the paper and flung it into the corner.

"But what can have so suddenly led him to this step?"

Thiel shrugged his shoulders. "The resolutions of men are sometimes as incalculable as those of women."

"He cannot possibly have to atone for a sin."

"Fräulein von Markwald is above suspicion," said Thiel sternly, interrupting her.

"Linden may be still more so, but the world, which does not know him so well as I and—you, will probably think something of the sort."

"Certainly. Evil tongues have already begun their work. The newspaper containing the announcement is still damp, and I have even now heard the conjecture expressed that the baron was marrying Fräulein von Markwald because he had been forced to do so by her brother, who thought that Linden had compromised her by his attentions."

"Forced Linden! He who has killed two opponents in a duel! A Hussar officer will not frighten him. That's nonsense."

"Of course it is nonsense. Only I don't see why people need go so far to seek an explanation. Linden marries because he thinks he has found a suitable life-companion. He really isn't too young for it."

"No," remarked Frau von der Lehde, "but I fear: too old."

"I don't know that," observed Thiel.

"Doctor, you are not in earnest. Linden might still marry a quiet, sensible woman of mature years, but a young girl who might be his daughter—he must have lost his senses."

"Madame, that is still far from being manifest to me, marriage often has a rejuvenating influence."

"Marriage with a girl like Käthe Markwald? If I were Linden, I should fear eyes like hers. She belongs to the species of sleeping monsters. Woe betide the man who wakes and is not strong enough to conquer them."

Thiel could not help smiling. "I repeat, marriage often works marvels of resurrection. And in the worst case—the matter need not yet be taken tragically."

Frau von der Lehde could not console herself for the final loss of Linden, but she understood that she could do nothing more to hold him or to win him back. In the first place because he could not be reached. Contrary to universal expectation, he soon tore himself away from his charming fiancée and set off on his summer travels much earlier than in former years. He extended them full three months, which he spent at various sea-shore watering-places. He was sometimes seen here, sometimes there, first at Rügen, then at Sylt, lastly at Heligoland, where the surf is most powerful. The marriage took

place early in September. Every one admired the bridal pair. Käthe was fresh and blooming as a newly opened Marshal Niel rose, Robert as handsome and elegant as in his best days. The difference in age was scarcely apparent. Only a close observer could have noticed a certain nervous anxiety in Robert's face which, though bronzed by the sun and the salt air of the sea-shore, was visibly pale. He did not look as happy by the side of his radiant bride as might have been expected. Stings of conscience, said many women who had once been on familiar terms with him and had now had the self-control to come to the church, which was crowded to suffocation. Frau von der Lehde was not among them.

Robert von Linden now realized the dream of the last few months; he took his bewitching young wife, his proudest and, as he faithfully resolved, his last conquest, to Italy. But, according to all that was learned afterward, it was a strange wedding journey. The couple appeared in all the larger cities of Upper, Middle and Lower Italy, but the newly-wedded pair seemed unable to remain anywhere more than two or three days. The bride looked depressed and dissatisfied, the bridegroom haggard and unhappy. About three weeks after the marriage, Lieutenant von Markwald received a letter from his sister which induced him to write at once to Doctor Thiel and ask him confidentially what he thought of Baron von Linden's health, his brother-in-law evidently considered himself very ill; for since his departure he had consulted several physicians at every place where they stopped, even for a day, he appeared to be in very low spirits, and utterly neglected his sister, who was so anxious about him that she entreated her brother to come to her assistance. Dr. Thiel hastened to answer the lieutenant that he need not be uneasy, it was probably only an attack of hypochondria. At the same time he asked for his brother-in-law's address, as he intended to write to him at once.

About a week after news reached the capital which spread with the rapidity of a conflagration. Baron Robert von Linden had died suddenly at Ischia. This was the version which reached the newspapers and the public. But, in the court circle, it was known that the unfortunate man had committed suicide. Frau von der Lehde had instantly suspected it, she obtained certainty from the lips of the princess, to whom Käthe had telegraphed the terrible tidings at the same time she sent the message to her brother. She hastened to Thiel, who was crushed by the event, for he was not merely an affectionate physician to Linden, but also a loyal friend.

"It is horrible," cried the agitated woman, as she let herself fall into an arm-chair.

He answered only by a sorrowful gesture of the hand.

"Do you know the particulars?"

"A bullet through the head. The night of day before yesterday. In the dressing-room beside the chamber where his wife was lying."

A pause ensued. Then Else, raising her tearful eyes to the doctor, said:

"You see, you see, this marriage was his destruction. He would be alive and happy to-day, if he had had me at his side."

"Or me," said Thiel.

Else shook her head. "No, no. He wanted this last romance too late."

"Or despaired too soon," replied Thiel, gazing thoughtfully at the bronze statuette of Asclepius, which stood on the writing-desk before him.

HOW WOMEN LOVE.

I.

ONE WAY.

It was the first of November, 1878. The Paris Exposition was over, and Herr Rudolph Weltli was preparing to return to his home, Switzerland, after spending a beautiful sunny fortnight on the Seine. He had made the great bazaar on the Champ de Mars the pretext for his journey; but in reality the study of the exhibition, many as were the interesting objects it could offer to him, the engineer, was a somewhat minor matter, and he devoted his stay in Paris principally to walks through the streets, excursions to the environs, wanderings through the museums, in short, endless pilgrimages to all the

scenes where, more than a quarter of a century before, the drama of his student's life in Paris had been enacted for three years, and whose image was interwoven with the most beloved memories of his youth.

A quarter of a century! Almost a human life-time. And, during this long period, he had not seen Paris again. When he left it he intended to return very soon and very often. But, as usually happens, life morosely opposed this pleasant plan. He was bound by the fetters of duty, and only imagination could allow itself to wander into the alluring blue distance.

Whoever makes his first visit to Rome throws a piece of money into the Fontana Trevi to be sure that he will see the eternal city again. We need not bind ourselves to Paris by such little superstitious practices. Its mysterious spell obtains the pledge without any intervention, and lures and draws the absent one so that he cannot rest until he returns. But why attribute this spell to Paris alone? Every place where we have been young, dreamed, loved, and suffered, possesses it. We feel the affection for it which the ploughman has for the field to which he entrusted his seed. We have the desire to see whether we shall still find traces of our wanderings, and are joyously surprised when we discover that wherever we sowed our youth, the best part of ourselves, invisible to others, but tangible to us, a rich harvest of memories has sprung up.

Every year Rudolf planned the journey to Paris, every year he was compelled to defer it to the next, and he was already beginning to accustom himself to a sorrowful resignation, when the World's Fair of 1878 gave the external impulse for the realization of his long-cherished dream.

The holiday weeks on which his mind had been fixed so many years had passed as swiftly as a dream, and the daily yoke of professional work must again be put on. The last day of his stay in Paris fell on the anniversary of All Souls. Rudolf, with the great majority of Parisians, used it to visit the cemeteries. He spent the first hours of the afternoon in Père la Chaise, where, beside the old, well-known graves, he inspected with great interest the monuments erected since his residence in Paris—of Musset, Rossini, Michelet, Regnault, Countess d'Agoult and other celebrities. From Père la Chaise he drove to the cemetery of Montmartre, where he merely wished to place a wreath of immortelles on Heine's grave. But once there, he could not go away without looking about the place a little.

He strolled slowly along the streets of graves, in which, amid commonplace stone slabs and insignificant iron crosses, stately monuments rose at brief intervals, though they rarely bore inscribed on their fronts a name of sufficient distinction to afford a justification for attracting the attention of the wanderer; while as a rule they were only memorials of the vanity extending beyond the grave of the poor obscure mortal whose ashes they sheltered.

The graves were adorned in various ways for the great festival of the dead. The narrow walks around them were strewn with fresh yellow gravel and river sand; pots of blossoming plants stood on the slabs and at the foot of the crosses; on the arms of the latter hung garlands of evergreen and yellow or red immortelles, but also the ugly wreaths of painted plaster and glass beads with affected inscriptions, which dishonour Parisian industry. Beside these mounds, where the work of a loving hand was apparent, and whose dead were evidently united by filaments of love to a tender human being still breathing in the sunshine, forsaken and neglected ones often appeared, on which only a few rain-soaked, decaying leaves of paper wreaths were mouldering, where moss and weeds grew rankly, and in which lay dead for whom no one grieved, and who were now remembered by none in the world of the living. But how speedily one is forgotten in Paris. How soon the ocean of the world's capital swallows up, not only a human being, but his family, all his friends and acquaintances, and even his memory! A chill ran down Rudolf's spine as he pondered over the melancholy thought of living and dying in Paris as a stranger.

As he drifted aimlessly on with the flowing human stream, he suddenly found himself in a narrow side-path before a monument surrounded by a specially dense throng. Several rows of people, principally workmen and their wives, were standing around it, those behind thrusting their heads over the shoulders of the front ranks, the new arrivals pressing impatiently upon those who had taken the place before them and now, as though spell-bound by an absorbing spectacle, stood motionless, making no sign of moving on. Yet the whole crowded group was pervaded by a calmness, a solemn earnestness, not often found among the worshippers in church. Rudolf, whose curiosity was awakened, forced his way through the living wall to the front rank, and suddenly stood—before the monument of Baudin, the republican representative of the people who, on the 3d of December, 1851, was shot down in the streets of Paris by drunken soldiers, as, girdled with the tri-coloured sash, which made him recognizable as a member of the legislature, he protested from the top of a barricade against Bonaparte's *coup d'etat*. A familiar anecdote is associated with the death of this hero. As, surrounded by a few persons of similar views, he was preparing to ascend the barricade, some workmen passing by shouted derisively: "There goes a twenty-five franc man!" This was the insult with which the

proletarians, who were systematically incited against the National Assembly, designated the representatives of the people, alluding to their daily pay. Baudin calmly answered: "You will see presently how one can die for twenty-five francs!" and a moment after, fell under the bullets of the soldiery.

At the sight of the monument Rudolf felt the emotion which it awakens in every spectator. On a rectangular stone pedestal lies the life-size bronze figure of Baudin, draped to the breast in a cloak, the left hand hanging in the relaxation of death, while the right convulsively clutches a symbolical table of laws, with the inscription "La Loi," through which passes a treacherous rent. Baudin's face is that of a middle-aged man, with commonplace features, smooth-shaven lips and chin, and the regulation whiskers. But this ordinary countenance becomes grand and heroic by a horrible hole in the forehead, from which blood and brains have gushed. Oh, how such a hole in the brow, pierced by a bullet sent to murder liberty, transfigures a man's visage! A supernatural radiance appears to stream from this tragical opening, into which we cannot gaze without having our eyes overflow with tears.

Rudolf was more touched by the unspeakably pathetic monument than any of the others who reverently surrounded it; for he remembered how narrowly he, too, had escaped a fate akin to that of the martyr before whose statue he had unexpectedly wandered. As he followed the path toward the exit from the cemetery, he again saw himself on the terrible night of December 3d and 4th, 1851, lying weltering in his blood, with failing consciousness, upon the wet pavement of the Rue Montmartre, a bullet in his right hip. The memory of that moment was so vivid, that he fancied he again felt the pain in his hip and began to limp, as he had done for months after the wound. In the broad avenue leading to the main entrance new visions rose before him, made still more intense by the recollections of the coup d'etat evoked by the sight of Baudin's grave. At the right he saw the monument of Gottfried Cavaignac in the midst of the great common grave, into which all the nameless victims of the street fights were thrown in a horrible medley. This blood-stained bit of earth surrounds a circular border of flowers, in whose centre, above a low mound covered with stone slabs, rises a plain iron cross. Rudolf entered the sinister circle and paused beside it. Very peculiar emotions stole over him. It seemed as though he were standing within a cabalistic line which divided him from the world and life. The air within the magic circle appeared more chill than without. He imagined he felt a stir and tremor in the ground beneath his feet as if the dead below were moving, and scraping with their bony fingers on the cover of their narrow abode.

"I should now be lying there with the rest, if the bullet had taken a little different course!" he thought, drawing a long breath of relief. He glanced around him. At the foot of the cross was a heap of wreaths and bouquets, and several women were kneeling on the stone slabs, murmuring silent prayers. "Are there still, after the lapse of twenty-seven years, mourners who remember the dead? No one would have come for my sake, if they had thrown me there too."

He was standing beside one of the kneeling women, at whom he gazed with deep sympathy. She was dressed in black, a long black veil hung from her head, and she seemed wholly absorbed in her fervour. Feeling a steady gaze fixed upon her, she involuntarily looked up. Their eyes met. She sank back with a stifled cry which seemed to issue from a throat suddenly compressed. Involuntarily stretching her arms toward him, while her eyes half closed and consciousness seemed failing, her blanching lips whispered:

"Rudolf! Rudolf!"

He had retreated a step, astonished and bewildered, at the first cry, now he caught the fainting woman in his arms, drew her to his breast, and murmured in a hollow tone:

"Pauline! Is it possible! Pauline!"

She tottered to her feet, her knees trembled, she laid both hands on his shoulders and gazing steadily at him with head thrown back and dilated eyes, said:

"Is it really you! Is it you, Rudolf. You are alive!"

"So you believed me dead?" he asked in a trembling voice, bowing his head.

"I believed that you were down there," she answered, pointing to the stone slabs at their feet.

"And you came to-day——"

"To you, Rudolf; to-day as I have come every year for twenty-seven years. See, Rudolf, that is the wreath I laid there for you. And," she added in a very low tone, after a brief pause, "when I suddenly saw you before me, I thought you had risen from this grave to see me once more."

She again remained silent a short time, during which her glances timorously caressed him. "And do

you know what instantly convinced me that I beheld no ghost? Because you no longer look as you did at the time when you would have been laid here, if you had really died. The dead do not change. But you, my poor Rudolf, have certainly altered."

"Do you find me very much changed?"

Pauline gazed at him a long time. Her eyes wandered slowly over his figure, his features, his whole appearance, then, as if speaking to herself, she said:

"Not really, Rudolf, not much, after all."

She was probably the only person in the world who could say it; the only one who could see in his countenance the face of the youth of twenty-three, as a practised eye detects, under a palimpsest, the effaced, almost invisible characters of the original writing. For her, his former wealth of brown locks still waved in the place of the closely cut, thin grey hair; she saw the bushy moustache fine and curled, the wrinkled skin ruddy and smooth, the somewhat corpulent figure slender and pliant; she transferred to the man of fifty before her, feature by feature, the image which lived in her faithful memory, transfigured and handsomer than the reality had ever been. And Rudolf did the same. His imagination effaced the little wrinkles around her eyes and mouth, restored to those dim black eyes the sparkle and mirthfulness of youth, developed, from the somewhat fleshy outlines, the graceful forms of the cheeks, chin, neck, bust, which he had once beheld and loved, recognized the raven braids which alone had lost none of their beauty, and saw in the faded woman the blooming girl, surrounded by all the magic of her nineteen years, whom he had left twenty-seven years ago.

Her first excitement had calmed a little during the silent observation which had occupied several minutes; her voice had regained its natural tone, and only trembled a little as she asked:

"But now, for Heaven's sake, tell me how all this has happened? Our concierge saw you when you fell in the street and were carried away."

"He saw correctly."

"Then you were not killed?"

"Merely wounded."

"Well, and—?"

"You know how I left you. I was excited, bareheaded, mad. When I came out of the Passage Saumon into the Rue Montmartre, I found the street deserted, but I heard the roll of drums in the distance, soldiers seemed to be pressing forward from the boulevard. Several persons ran past, trying to escape into the side streets. Before I could clearly understand what was going on around me, a volley of musketry was fired, I felt a violent blow and fell. A few paces from me another man fell, who did not move again. A window in the Passage Saumon opened and instantly closed.

"The soldiers came up, carrying lanterns and torches. They found the other man first, and threw the light into his face. Several voices rose and I saw bayonets thrust into his body. Then they came to me. Bayonets were already flashing above me, I instinctively thrust out my hands in defense, an officer cried: 'Halt!' approached me, and asked who I was. I said as quickly as my mortal fright would permit, that I was a Swiss, a pupil of the *École Centrale*, lived in the Passage Saumon, had accidentally entered the street and been wounded by a shot. The officer looked at my hands, they were not blackened by powder. The light of the lanterns was cast around—I lay in my own blood, but no weapon was near. 'Where is your hat?' asked the officer. 'I wore none when I left home.' 'That is suspicious,' he said, to my terror, but after a moment's reflection, which to me seemed an eternity, gave orders that I should be placed in a vegetable dealer's cart, which had been abandoned by the owner, and taken to a hospital. Four soldiers flung me roughly into the vehicle and dragged me to the Hôtel Dieu."

He paused in his narrative.

Pauline looked at him and her eyes filled with tears.

"If I could tell you how I passed that night! You had scarcely gone out, when the concierge rushed into the room, panting: 'Mademoiselle Pauline! Mademoiselle Pauline! They have just shot our Monsieur Rudolf and carried him off.' I wanted to fly down, he forcibly prevented me. I tried to throw myself out of the window, he would not permit it. I was obliged to wait until morning. Then I ran to the morgue, to the cemeteries, wherever corpses were exposed; I saw many, oh, a horrible number of them, but I did not find you."

She had blanched to the lips as she spoke, and her eyes looked vacant. Rudolf drew her toward him

and she unconsciously let her head sink upon his shoulder.

"I was sure that you were dead," she went on, "and that you had been flung into this common grave. Everybody whom I asked told me so. And you sent no message? Why not, if you were still in the Hotel Dieu? Were you not allowed to do so? Were you unconscious?"

"Both, my poor child. For several days I was so ill that I could form no distinct thoughts. When I grew better, I was placed under rigid surveillance, for they suspected me of having fought on the barricades. I was compelled to communicate with my ambassador that he might give information about me, and answer——"

"But if you could communicate with your ambassador, you could also have sent me——"

He made no answer.

"And then you were cured," she went on more urgently, "and during these long, long years, did it never enter your mind to care for me?"

He hung his head in embarrassment, and with deep pain avoided the glance she fixed upon him. Why had he not written to her, why had he not returned to his lodgings when he left the hospital? He could not yet tell her the truth, not now, not here. Shame and repentance seized him when he thought of it now; simply because he was glad to be able to leave Paris without seeing Pauline again.

It was the old story, which ever remains new. A young student in Paris meets a pretty young working-girl, who is alone in the world; they are pleased with each other, the girl willingly throws herself into the young man's arms, and these arms gladly clasp the affectionate young creature who nestles in them. Under favourable circumstances, this careless, happy relation lasts a year or two, then comes the time when the student has completed his studies and practical life claims him. Farewell to the delightful love-life, with no care for the future, no responsibility! Farewell to the dove-like nest for two in an attic chamber filled with the roseate morning light of youth and hope! As a rule the parting takes place without trouble. He is calm, and she is sensible. Then they dine together in the country, for the last time, drink champagne, and separate with blithesome wishes for future prosperity. Or they are both sentimental. Then there is a little weeping and sighing, they promise to write to each other and probably do so for a time, and it is days, perhaps even weeks before the wound in the heart which, happily, is not very deep, heals.

But often, oh, often——

Well, Rudolf's case was precisely one of these. When it was time to leave Paris to begin his professional life, he perceived with terror that the bonds which united him to Pauline were much firmer than he had ever supposed. For two years she had shared his room in the Passage Saumon and, during this whole period, she had not caused him a moment's sorrow, had always thought only of him, to see him content and happy. She went to her work-room in the morning with a kiss and a smile, and returned in the evening with a smile and an embrace. If he was at work she sat quietly in her corner, looking over at him; if he wanted to be gay, she was as frolicsome as a poodle. If he took her to the theatre, she kissed his hand in gratitude. If he went out alone, she was sad, but she said nothing and asked no questions, which touched him so much that he gradually relinquished the habit of going out alone. If he gave her anything, she was reluctant to accept it; she would scarcely allow him even to bestow any articles of dress. In the whole two years he had never seen her nervous or out of temper. Yet he ought, he must repulse this loyal devotion. Yes, he must. For he could not be so crazy as to marry her! At twenty-three! A girl who had been picked up on the sidewalk of the Rue Montmartre. The thought was so absurd that it was not worth while to dwell upon it a moment. Then, when he told her that the happiness must now end, he saw her, to his surprise and terror, turn deadly pale and sink back fainting.

On recovering her consciousness, she burst into endless sobs, clung to his neck, covered him with burning kisses and tears, and exclaimed:

"No, no, you won't leave me; I cannot, I cannot, I would rather die."

He vainly endeavored to bring her to reason. She would listen to nothing. "For what do you reproach me?" The question could not help embarrassing him; for he had nothing with which to reproach her, except that she had been the object of his love, a reproach which of all men on earth he should be the last to make; and that she was poor, which he was ashamed to utter; and that she was uneducated, which could be no serious obstacle, for she made up for ignorance by natural wit and intelligence, and innate refinement. She wanted reasons, he could offer none except: "Why, dear child, surely you will see that we must part now." That, however, was precisely what she could not perceive, and she continued to weep, saying mournfully: "Rudolf, Rudolf, do not leave me. I love you, and that is always

something. I want nothing except to have you keep me with you. No one will ever love you as I do."

These unspeakably painful scenes, to which Rudolf had not the courage to put a heroic end, were repeated many days. When Pauline's tears became unendurable, he went out and wandered for hours through the streets, restless, out of humour, tortured. It had happened so on that third of December, and—

This was the reason that he had not written to her or returned to his lodgings. The soldier's bullet seemed to him a merciful interposition of Fate, which released him from his difficulties. When health was restored, he fairly fled from Paris, leaving behind him the few effects of a jolly student. This soothed his conscience a little, and moreover he told himself that he owed Pauline nothing, that she did not need him, that she, who possessed a thoroughly reasonable, nay, superior nature, would henceforward pursue the path of honour. True, a secret voice often cried out to him: "Coward! Coward!" But then he solaced himself by shrugging his shoulders and thinking that everybody else would have done the same, and she would console herself quickly enough.

Of course he could not confess this to her, but it was not necessary. She had divined it all.

With a melancholy smile, she said:

"I understand, my poor Rudolf, I understand you were glad to get rid of troublesome Pauline. The bullet spared you the pain of bidding me farewell." She was about to say more, but she forced it all back into her heart. She had never reproached him, should she do so now, in the spot which, for so many years, she had believed his grave?

Clasping her hand, Rudolf pressed it tenderly, and to give the painful conversation a pleasanter turn, asked:

"What are you doing now, how do you fare, Pauline?"

"I thank you for asking me." There was not a tinge of sarcasm or bitterness in these words, nothing but gratitude. "I am getting on perfectly well. I have worked, have made myself independent, and am now employing eight or ten workwomen, I am well-off, almost rich."

She divined a question in the expression of his eyes, and said quickly:

"Always, Rudolf, I have always remained faithful to you. I did not lack offers, you can understand that—but I would not accept. I was ashamed. And I wanted to have only your memory in my heart. Does that surprise you? I suppose you don't believe it? Of course. It isn't to be believed. A girl is courted. What else is there. When one has wearied of her, she is abandoned. But she was so foolish as to love sincerely and can never, never console herself." This time she was growing bitter. Her lips quivered, and she passed her hand across her eyes, once she sobbed softly. Suddenly she drew from her pocket an old leather book, which she gave him. While, with emotion, he recognized it as his own note-book, and found on the first page his half effaced caricature which a comrade in the *Ecole Centrale* had once sketched, she took from her bosom an enamelled locket, opened it, and held it before his eyes. It was a gift from him, and contained a lock of brown hair—his hair! He could not resist the impulse and clasped her passionately to his breast, in spite of the people who were passing to and fro outside of the circle of flowers.

"Do you believe me now?" she asked releasing herself.

His sole answer was to raise her hand to his lips.

She held his right hand firmly. "And you, Rudolf?"

With an involuntary movement, he tried to draw it from her grasp. This led her to glance quickly at it. The third finger bore a wedding ring.

Pauline uttered a deep sigh, let his hand fall, closed her eyes, and tottered a moment. Then she suddenly sank upon her knees in the same spot where she had knelt before, and her lips began to murmur a prayer.

"Pauline!" he cried imploringly.

She shook her head gently, as though to drive away an inner vision, and turned entirely away from him.

"Pauline! Let me at least have your address! I will not leave you so again!"

She bowed her head upon her clasped hands, and neither moved nor answered.

Rudolf went close to her and laid his hand on her shoulder. A long shudder passed visibly and perceptibly through her whole frame, and she buried her face still more closely in her hands.

He understood her—

The first signal of bell ringing sounded, which announced the closing of the cemetery. Rudolf cast a hasty glance towards the entrance. His wife and his brother-in-law, with whom he had appointed this place of meeting, had just appeared there and were looking in every direction. Rudolf glanced once more at the kneeling supplicant, then with a slow, noiseless, faltering step he left the circle of flowers. He passed down the wide avenue as though walking in a dream. When he had nearly reached the gate he stopped and turned for the last time. The western sky was steeped in the glow of sunset. A light mist was rising from the damp ground, filling the paths of the cemetery and effacing the outlines of the human beings and the monuments. Shrouded by these floating vapours, Pauline's motionless dark figure stood forth in strong relief against the bright sky, and seemed to be gradually merging into a background of flaming crimson sunset.

Rudolf felt as if he were beholding his own youth fade and melt into white cloudlets of mist.

II.

ANOTHER WAY.

"So we have met again, old fellow?" said Wolf Breuning, with heartfelt pleasure, filling his friend Sigmund Friese's glass with wine.

"May it not be so long before the next meeting," cried Sigmund, as he touched glasses and drank.

Wolf Breuning, a tall, handsome man, with bold blue eyes and a long, parted beard, which seemed as though it was woven of threads of red gold, was the manager of a chemical factory in Paris. Sigmund Friese, shorter in stature, with a gentle, somewhat sensitive face, a short, fair, curly beard, and hair aristocratically thin, which already suggested a diplomatic bald head, was teaching mathematics in an American university. Both were natives of South Germany, friends from childhood, and had once plunged into the flood of life from the same spot on the shore, but were afterward washed far apart.

After a long absence, Sigmund had come from Washington to Europe to attend his sister's wedding, and availed himself of the opportunity, on the way from Havre to Mannheim, to visit his friend Wolf in Paris. The latter met him at the station and took him to his pleasant bachelor lodgings in the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette. Now, scarcely an hour later, the first overflow of mutual confidences had been exchanged, and the friends were seated comfortably at dinner.

"Do you know that it is thirteen years since our last meeting?" asked Wolf.

"Thirteen years!" sighed Sigmund. "How many more times shall we experience such a period?"

"Never again," replied Wolf, "the period from the twenty-fourth to the thirty-seventh year."

"The festal time of life!" said Sigmund; and after a pause, raising the glass to his lips, he added:

"Gone, gone!"

"You have no cause to complain," said Wolf consolingly; "youth is past, but you have used it well. A great name in science, an honourable position, comfortable circumstances——"

Sigmund smiled sorrowfully and pointed to his bald head.

"Yes, my friend," cried Wolf, "we must make no unreasonable demands on life. Luxuriant locks, and a well-paid professorship, teeth and celebrity, youth and orders, prosperity, successes of all kinds, these we cannot have unless we are born to royal rank."

"When we consider how much we strive and how little we attain! What we dream, and to what realities we waken."

"Sigmund, you are unjust. Thirteen years ago did you imagine, in your boldest expectations, more than you have now attained?"

"Perhaps not. But, to have it afford me pleasure, I ought to have attained it immediately after that

time."

"Of course we are more weary when we reach the goal than at the start."

"But this weariness very materially diminishes our pleasure in having reached it."

"Ah, I know the one thing wanting for your happiness," cried Wolf.

"Well?"

"A wife."

"Oh! you have no right to preach marriage, since you have remained a bachelor yourself."

"I am three years younger than you."

"But you are thirty-seven."

"True," replied Wolf, and for a time remained silent and thoughtful.

Then he continued:

"What would you have? Fate destines us to live in a foreign country, without family intercourse, far from the circle with which one is united by early memories and the first affections of the heart; we do not definitely seek, Fate does not help us find. We adjust our lives to habits which really leave no room for a wife, and so the years flit by till some day we discover that we are bachelors and that it is too late to change."

"That is exactly my case; I did not suppose it was yours also."

"With me," replied Wolf, "something else is added. Recollections which make marriage rather dreaded than desired. We know how we have been loved, and fear that we shall not find such love again. We compare in advance a virtuous wife with the woman whose distant image is somewhat transfigured by the past, and confess that we have been completely spoiled for the part of a husband content to sit phlegmatically in the chimney corner."

"You still think of Helene?" cried Sigmund in surprise.

"Why shouldn't I?" replied Wolf, "you also remember her, as I see."

"True," Sigmund assented. "I have not forgotten her. She was a bewitchingly beautiful and charming woman. What a tempting mouth! What wicked eyes! And her clever talk! Her merry disposition! Wherever she was, she filled everything with life and animation."

Wolf gazed thoughtfully into vacancy, and made no reply.

"She loved you very dearly," Sigmund added.

Still Wolf remained silent.

"And you loved her."

"Yes," Wolf answered at last, drawing his fingers slowly through his red beard. "I loved Helene very dearly. So long as I was with her, I did not notice it, and when the child was born, I even felt greatly disturbed by the thought that I should now have her bound to me forever. Not until after we had separated did I discover how large a place she had filled in my life. And the more distant that time becomes, it grows larger instead of less. A reversion of all the laws of perspective."

"But an intelligible phenomenon," observed Sigmund. "Helene has become, in your remembrance, the embodiment of your youth, and the longing with which you think of her concerns your twenty-four years at least as much as she herself."

"It may be so. The fact is that I see Helene in a golden light of youth and careless happiness, and cannot think of her without tears."

"Do you know, friend Wolf, that you perhaps did wrong to leave her?"

"There are hours when I believe it. When we have found a creature whom we love, and who loves us in return, we ought on no account to give her up. We never know whether it will be possible to replace. And, after all, love is the only thing which makes life worth living."

"What would you have, Sigmund? That is the wisdom of mature years. At four and twenty we have not yet reached that knowledge. At that time I perceived only that I had picked Helene up in the Luxembourg gardens, that is, as it were, in the streets. I knew that I was not her first love—"

"But her only one," interposed Sigmund.

"So she said, yes. But I had the feeling that I owed her nothing. Love for love. This I gave her, and she ought to ask nothing more. Yet it was an extremely careless relation, and I fully realized its doubtful character. At that time I should have advised any one else in my situation to release themselves from it kindly, and—well, I gave myself the same counsel.

"Your heart, even then, must have told you that you were wrong, and I think your common sense tells you so now. After all, the reasoning of the heart and that of the intellect does not differ so widely as silly wise folk suppose."

Wolf made no answer.

"Do you remember," Sigmund began again, "when I came from Heidelberg to visit you thirteen years ago? It was my first trip to Paris. The city, its life, the people, everything produced an overpowering impression upon me. And in the midst of this frantic rush was the charming idyl; you and Helene. Your little room in the quiet street seemed like a magic isle in the roaring ocean. What was the name of that street?"

"The Rue St. Dominique."

"Yes. I should like to make a pilgrimage there to see the old house."

"Impossible. The house has been torn down. The street has disappeared. The magnificent Boulevard St. Germain now runs through there."

"So nothing is to be found again! Nothing is left of all the beautiful things which we experience, save the shadow of its memory in our souls! We ought never to return to the scenes of past happiness, unless we are sure of finding them unchanged."

Sigmund was becoming more and more tender and sensitive. It was his nature.

He continued:

"How often I have lived over again the evening when you went to Dr. Amandier's reception, and left me alone with Helene. I was very awkward. I did not know how I ought to treat her, and the more at ease she appeared, the more embarrassed I became. I paid her compliments, she laughed. Conversation was difficult, for I had no great knowledge of French. She took pity on me and sat down at the cottage piano. She played very prettily. Very often she turned round and smiled at me. She was extremely bewitching, and my heart glowed. I envied you. I planned all sorts of base things. I paid court to her. I confess it now. You are not angry with me?"

"Don't fear," replied Wolf smilingly, "Helene told me about it as soon as I came home. I was not jealous of you."

"Thank you," replied Sigmund with comical irritability. "Summoning my whole vocabulary, I said all sorts of pretty things to her, but while talking excitedly, with burning cheeks, she took up the little dog our friend Tannemann gave her, and calmly began to hunt for fleas in his curly hair. This made me so furious that I started up and rushed off without a farewell."

"But you were appeased the next day," observed Wolf.

"Of course. When my blood had become cool, her composure in the presence of my love-making inspired respect. Then we became the best friends, and she remarked: 'Since you no longer say that you love me, I love you.' And do you remember the Sunday excursion?"

"Certainly. To St Cloud. With Tannemann."

"It was enough to make one die of laughing. Helene intentionally talked extremely fast, so that Tannemann, who knew little about French, could not understand her. He was terribly provoked because he was continually obliged to ask her to repeat everything two or three times. What a merry breakfast we had on the grass in the midst of the ruins!"

"You carried the two bottles of wine in the pockets of your overcoat."

"And you the ham and the chicken. Helene had the bread and butter and the dishes in a little basket.

Tannemann was to furnish the dessert. But when the time came for that, he declared that there was some misunderstanding, nothing had been said to him about it."

"He is still the same skinflint he was then."

"The same old pedant, too? Whenever Helene kissed you, he looked away indignantly."

"Helene was very loving that day. How you blushed when she said that the only thing we needed to be thoroughly comfortable was that you should have brought a little friend too."

Sigmund sighed deeply.

"Yes, we were young then," Wolf said, closing the retrospect.

"And you at least know that you have been young. You possess beautiful memories, of which nothing and no one can deprive you.

"Who'er has been clasped in the arms of love,
All poverty's ills is for aye raised above;
E'en though he should die afar and alone,
Still would he possess the blissful hour
When kisses upon her lips he did shower,
And, e'en in death, she would yet be his own."

"Yours?" asked Wolf.

"Nonsense, that's no mathematician's poetry. Old Storm."

"The feeling is true, though it is somewhat insipidly expressed. Memories are indeed wealth, though it arouses melancholy to rummage amid the treasure."

"Tell me, Wolf—what has become of Helene?"

"I hope she is faring very well."

"You do not know?"

"I will tell you what I know about her. I was going to Spain at that time, as you are aware, about the copper-mining business. But I had to give it up because I would not leave Helene. Our child died when it was six weeks old. What would I give if I had the boy now! Then I considered his death the solving of a problem. I told Helene that I must now go to Huelva. She wanted to accompany me. Of course that would not do. There were passionate scenes, but I released myself. She promised to return to her father in Douai, and she kept her word, because for a time her letters came from there."

"So you wrote to each other?"

"Yes, at first. After some time she suddenly appeared in Paris again. She wrote in apology that she could no longer endure that dull Douai with her morose old father. After that I heard nothing from her for a long time. Then came a letter informing me that she was going to marry a wine-merchant, who cherished no resentment for her past, as her father had made a sacrifice!"

"Shame!"

"You just said yourself that I ought to have bound her permanently to my life."

"Yes, from love, not for a dowry. Besides, you had less to forgive than the wine-merchant."

"What of it—that's the morality of people who are called practical."

"And then?"

"Then the marriage probably took place. I have heard nothing more from Helene."

"Did you not try to learn something about her?"

"To be honest—no. I do not think I have a right to cross her path. And what would have been the object of another advance, since she was married? True—I often feel—but we combat such emotions."

"She has never made the attempt to see you again? Perhaps she thinks that you are still in Spain."

"Or she is dead. For when people have loved each other so ardently in the glorious days of youth, it is impossible to live and become strangers. At least it seems so to me."

"Ah, Sigmund, life is a cruel extinguisher of lights."

"Certainly, but there are flames which life does not extinguish. Only death——"

A few months had passed since the meeting of the two friends. Sigmund Friese was again in Washington, teaching mathematics, when one day he received the following letter from Wolf Breuning.

"DEAREST SIGMUND:—

"What wonderful things chance can bring to pass in the capital! I am writing to you under the fresh impression of the incident. You will open your eyes! I was walking through the Rue Rochechouart about two o'clock this afternoon when an elegantly dressed lady, coming from the opposite direction, suddenly stopped just in front of me. As I was absorbed in thought, at first I took no notice but passed on. After a few steps the fleeting perception became a distinct consciousness, and I involuntarily turned. There the lady still stood, as if rooted to the spot, looking after me. I went back somewhat hesitatingly, though curious, she hastily advanced to meet me and, ere I could distinguish her features through the thick veil, she cried in a stifled voice: 'I was not mistaken! It is really you! What good luck! What good luck!' As she spoke she stretched out both hands, clasped mine, pressed them, and continued to hold them. You have guessed it: Helene. What shall I say to you, my friend? I felt as if I were in a dream. Before me stood the woman of whom I so often thought, since your visit more frequently and more tenderly than ever, the personification of my happiest moments, the love of my youth, transfigured by memory, for whom I had longed twelve years, whom I had never expected to see again! You know that I am not usually sentimental, but my eyes grew dim. I could say only: 'Helene!' Then we had embraced and kissed each other—through the veil—as if we were mad, in the public street, and in the presence of the passers-by, who looked at us curiously. Helene took my arm and drew me quickly forward in silence. A hack was passing. Helene stopped it, sprang in hastily, and then asked: 'Can we go to your home?' 'Certainly,' I cried. 'Then give the driver your address.' Now we again sat hand clasped in hand, gazing into each other's eyes, it was a moment full of mingled bliss and pain, such as I have scarcely ever experienced. Then came another shower of kisses and caresses, this time with the veil thrown back and even the hat laid aside—the twelve years of course have not passed over her leaving no trace, but she is still a beautiful, stylish woman—then followed questions. I was obliged to relate first how I had fared and what I had experienced. She rejoiced that I was unmarried, she pressed my hand when I told her that I had not ceased to think of her. Then she began to tell her story. She was married. Happily? She really had no cause to complain. Her husband, of course, was not I, but she made no comparisons. He treated her kindly. He made a great deal of money. Only she was bored. Besides, he was jealous. It was absurd, since he did not love her. On account of this jealousy she had been obliged to cease writing to me. She was stupid at that time and did not know for what the 'to be kept till called for' had been invented—

"Then we reached my lodgings. I was as soft-hearted and imbecile as a student at his first love-tryst. I did not wish to degrade this meeting to the level of a commonplace bachelor adventure. I wanted to keep the bloom and the fragrance of the flower.

"I began to speak of the past."

Alas, dear Sigmund!

"She first said that our meeting occurred in the year 1878. When I clasped my hands and mournfully exclaimed: 'Then you have forgotten that it was in 1874,' she was a little confused, but recovered with the swift remark: 'A date is of no importance, the main thing is that we were happy, oh, very happy!' I asked if she remembered our little nest.

"Certainly!" she cried, clapping her hands in delight. She remembered that it was in the Rue St. Dominique, but when I attempted to win from her a description of the furniture, the view from our two windows, she evaded it. I turned the conversation to you—I don't mention it to offend you—but there was not the faintest recollection! Completely forgotten! I spoke of Tannemann—nothing, nothing! Not until I recalled the little dog could she remember him, but it was especially the animal, the giver very dimly. I alluded to our excursion—her eyes sparkled, all the details, even the most minute incidents came back to her, and she related with the utmost fluency, in a rapture of delight, a picnic with breakfast in a hut built of branches and an extravagant quantity of wine—which we had never had together.

"What a shower-bath! My teeth fairly chattered from it. She noticed my coldness, asked if I had any other love, became irritated when I pretended not to hear the question, finally said that she must go,

and was thoroughly offended when I did not detain her. She went away without mentioning another meeting and I let her go, without even asking where she lived.

"I shall hardly see her again. I regret that I met her. To-day is the first time that I have wholly lost Helene, and the loss gives me pain. It was a beautiful self-delusion, and I would gladly have treasured it to my life's end.

"You were right when you said that we ought not return to the scenes of former happiness unless we were sure of finding them unchanged.

"A thousand kind remembrances from your strangely agitated

"WOLF.

"*Postscript.* Shall I tell you all I think? I believe that Helene has mistaken me for some one else——"

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

PART I.

Herr von Jagerfeld, a rich manufacturer who had recently been elevated to the rank of baron in the Bavarian nobility, was celebrating a double festival: his silver wedding and the completion of his castle, Franzensruhe, which he had built outside the gates of Marktbreit, on the slope of one of the hills, which, as the last western spur of the Steigerwald, roll in a gradual descent to the bank of the Main. The castle was a magnificent edifice, in the Renaissance style—of course. Red sandstone and white marble had been used, with a beautiful effect of colour, for the façade, which made a lavish display of pilasters with foliage and vine work, niches containing statues, and bay windows with beautiful wrought iron railings. The castle stood in the midst of a lovely park filled with trees a century old, which extended up to the summit of the hill and down to the river.

The master of the castle liked a lavish style. He had invited to his house-warming numerous guests, to whom, in the spacious apartments planned for this purpose, he could offer a really royal hospitality, at once magnificent and refined. They were chiefly land-owners from the province of the Main, rich merchants and manufacturers from Frankfort, and acquaintances from places still more remote, who had flocked here with their wives and grown children, so that from early morning the mansion had been filled with joyous life.

The entire company assembled for the first time at the banquet which took place in the evening. The large dining-hall, wainscoted with polished marble in the style of the Italian palaces, whose painted ceiling was supported by fluted columns, was lighted by a superb chandelier with hundreds of wax candles, and contained a long table very richly set. Silver ornaments, exquisitely wrought, adorned the centre and the ends. The china, the array of glasses of all shapes which stood beside each plate, bore the initial of the master of the house, without any heraldic addition which might recall the recent elevation of rank, a graceful bit of coquetry on the part of a man who had been successful in life, but who was no upstart. At every plate was also placed a bouquet, in a holder representing a crystal lily with a silver cup. The company harmonized with the luxurious environment. The married ladies attracted the eye by their elegant toilettes and rich jewels, the young girls—among whom were several of bewitching beauty and freshness—in simpler costumes, with flowers in their hair, by their natural charms. Even among the monotonous black dress coats of the men, an eye which took pleasure in colour found some degree of satisfaction in the gay uniforms of several Bavarian and Russian officers.

The hostess, still a pretty woman, with her wealth of fair hair and her clear complexion, over whose delicate transparency the years had passed with scarcely a trace, had at her right an elderly general with numerous orders, who, being a great eater and a very poor conversationalist, feasted his eyes alternately on his plate and on the pretty faces, whispering to his neighbour remarks about the viands and the feminine guests, whose artless simplicity—they consisted chiefly of a noun and a laudatory adjective—showed a profoundly satisfied and comfortable mood. At her left sat a highly esteemed friend of the family, Dr. Bergmann, a young physician, a tutor in the Wurzburg university, who, during the past three years had twice had the opportunity of saving Frau von Jagersfeld and her eldest daughter, in cases of severe illness, from threatening death, and to whom the whole family therefore felt unbounded gratitude. Bergmann was a handsome man, still under thirty, whose grave manner made him appear somewhat older. A thoughtful brow, an absolutely straight nose, large grey eyes,

which on first meeting them looked cold and penetrating, lips somewhat large, yet well modelled, dark beard, and a luxuriant head of hair which was permitted to wave, stand up, or lie flat at will, were the individual features which collectively formed a remarkably interesting head. His manner showed a peculiar mingling of modesty, nay, timidity, and vigorous self-reliance. It was evident that he was unaccustomed to the drawing-room and large companies, and felt at ease only beside a sick-bed. He was rather awkward in aimless chatter, but, on the other hand, firm and clear in professional conversation. A mere boy in the presence of a talkative, pretty girl, but a hero and a conqueror when with a suffering, anxious human being, beseeching his aid. His left-hand neighbour, the wife of a Frankfort banker, who chatted rapidly about the architecture of the dining-hall and the Wagner performances at Bayreuth, received monosyllabic, hesitating replies, while he talked eloquently to the lady on his right, the hostess, upon the influence of modern nervousness upon social forms.

He paid little heed to the guests, and had only glanced at them carelessly two or three times, bowing to acquaintances, and hastily obtaining a general impression of the strangers. At each of these surveys his eyes had remained fixed upon a lady who sat directly opposite to him, and whose beauty was remarkable, peculiar, and fascinating. So far as her figure could be seen, while seated, it appeared slight and delicate, without fragility, girlishly immature, yet not lean in form. The small head, supported by a slender, snow-white neck, was a marvel of grace and elegance, instantly recalling the bust of Clytie in the British Museum. One involuntarily looked for the sunflower from whose calyx it really ought to bloom. The brow was narrow and dazzlingly fair, the nose uncommonly delicate, slightly arched at the root, with mobile nostrils, so delicate that one might believe them transparent; the mouth not very small, but exquisitely shaped, with thin lips, curving obstinately, which curled sometimes sternly, sometimes scornfully, sometimes bitterly, but could also smile with infinite sweetness and charm; the chin round and statuesque, the cheeks neither plump nor hollow, with a delightful play of tender lights and soft, almost imperceptible shadows over their bright surfaces. But the most remarkable characteristics of this head were the large blue eyes, deep as the sea, beneath long lashes and nobly-formed brows, and the luxuriant, almost golden-red hair, whose silken wealth of naturally waving locks rested above the brow in two bands, like the gleaming wings of some bright-hued tropical bird, while the light of the candles, shining on the braids, struck out strange, satiny, metallic reflections, and a powdery, glimmering sparkle, as though the hair was dusted with gold or ruby powder. Her sole ornaments were a diamond star in the hair and an antique gold circlet on one of her bare arms. The white dress, trimmed on one side of the bosom to the opposite side of the waist with a garland of artificial flowers, looked simple, yet very elegant. The eye of the most critical woman could find no fault in the harmony of the toilette, the coldest man could not avert his gaze from the head, which constantly called forth the two comparisons to a Greek cameo, or a nixie, comparisons which the beautiful woman was compelled to hear so often that they seemed unbearably commonplace.

The young lieutenant—a count—who sat at her left hand, was probably whispering something of the sort into her little ear, for her face assumed a repellently cold, bored expression, and her eyes were fixed dreamily on vacancy,—many times farther away than the earth from the sun,—from her gallant neighbor, the table, and the hall. But Bergmann's gaze must have followed her all this distance, for it suddenly met hers, and the tall, grave fellow flushed under her pensive glance. The hostess looked at him just at this moment, and saw the blood mount into his cheeks.

"What is the matter?" she could not help whispering.

He blushed a second time, even more deeply.

But Frau von Jagerfeld had followed his eye, and now said, smiling:
"Ah, your opposite neighbor!"

"Who is the lady?" Bergmann asked, with some little embarrassment.

"Doctor," replied Frau von Jagerfeld, this time smiling, "take care. Many wings have already been scorched by her."

"Don't fear, madame. I can endure flames somewhat better than a moth."

"Come, come, a suspicious reflection of fire is already visible on your cheeks."

A shadow of annoyance flitted across Bergmann's face. His hostess laid her hand quickly on his arm, saying:

"Don't be vexed by a little jest, my dear friend. I will tell you who the beautiful woman is. She is a German-American, and her name is Mrs. Ada Burgess. Young and charming, as you see, the poor woman is unhappy. Her father is the owner of a gold mine somewhere in Nebraska, and was reputed a very wealthy man; at least he lived in extremely handsome style in St. Louis, and his daughter, who was

considered the handsomest girl in the west, from the time of her entrance into society was the reigning belle of every ball and entertainment. Mr. Burgess, who seems to have been a handsome and elegant man, was her most devoted suitor and appeared to be madly in love with her. Ada did not remain insensible to the persistent homage, and Burgess bore away the victory over numerous rivals. But it now appears that he has a base soul and his main object was the dowry. There, however, he was disappointed. Gold mines, evidently, are not always productive, at least Ada's father was ruined by his, and Ada did not receive a penny. Then the comedy of love played by Burgess ended. At first he treated her indifferently, then harshly, and soon matters became so bad that she was obliged to seek refuge from her husband's abuse in her parents' house. Her nerves had been so shaken by the horrible scenes which she experienced, that your American colleagues recommended a long residence in Europe for the restoration of her health. She came here, and for several months has lived in Frankfort, where the best society struggles for her. You can imagine that a young and beautiful woman entirely alone, whose husband is invisible, does not remain unassailed. Besides, there is the American independence and confidence of manner which is often mistaken for emancipation, and by which a man easily feels encouraged—in short, serious attention has been paid to her, and she has seemed to accept it. Then suddenly there came a repulse and a rupture, which has already resulted in injury to several somewhat delicately strung masculine hearts. Moreover she is very uneven in her manner. Often gay, even reckless, devising pranks like a spoiled boy, then suddenly reserved, distant, and stern. True, she is always intellectual, so that I know many a man who is uncomfortable in her society, to say nothing of women."

Frau von Jagerfeld had spoken eagerly in a low tone, with frequent interruptions when courtesy compelled her to listen to the numerous toasts which were chiefly proposed to her and to the master of the house. Mrs. Burgess could not long fail to notice that the two persons opposite were talking about her, and she smilingly shook her finger across the table at her friend.

"Poor woman," murmured Bergmann, "so bitter in experience at the threshold of life—But why does she endure her fate? It is so easy to be set free in America."

"I don't know. Perhaps on account of her children."

"Ah—she has children?"

"Two; and it is strange and touching to see how she rears them. Often she treats them like dolls, and amuses herself for hours by dressing and undressing them, dragging them around the room, and then suddenly dropping them in some sofa corner, head down and feet up. Then again, she talks gravely and tenderly to the little creatures, and tries to instil good principles—it is too comical. But she is a delightful creature, oh, a delightful creature——"

The banquet was over, honor was done to the last toast from brimming champagne glasses, and the guests went to the drawing-room. Several minutes elapsed before the gentlemen had escorted the ladies to their chairs, and the arrangement appointed according to rank and precedence, which had governed the seats assigned at the table, had yielded to free gathering in groups. Mrs. Burgess had dismissed her lieutenant with a somewhat curt bow, and took her place before a beautiful little Menzel, which she examined a long time. Frau von Jagerfeld and Bergmann released themselves almost at the same moment, the former from her old general, the latter from his banker's wife, and again found themselves side by side.

"Do you want me to introduce you to Ada?" she asked, quickly.

He bowed silently, and offered his arm. On reaching Ada, she lightly touched her on the shoulder, white as mother-of-pearl, with her fan, and when the lady, somewhat surprised, turned, Frau von Jagerfeld, smiling pleasantly, said: "My dear child, let me present to you our best friend, Dr. Bergmann. I must devote myself to the rest of my guests, and, unfortunately, have not time to tell you all the good I think of him. But you will discover all that is necessary for yourself. You know, my dear, that you are the two most interesting people here. It is fitting for you to be together." With these words she rustled away to address a few kindly words to the architect of the castle, who was surrounded by a numerous group.

Bergman stood before Mrs. Burgess, gazing at her gravely and intently. The more at ease of the two, she sat down on a sofa and, with a gesture of the hand, invited him to take the arm-chair in front of it.

"Frau von Jagerfeld has talked of you a great deal, and very enthusiastically," she said, in a musical, somewhat deep, resonant voice, which thrilled his every nerve like the sound of bells, and as he bowed, she added, smiling mischievously: "And of me to you; I watched you at the table."

"Yes," he answered, "and enthusiastically, also."

"She is a kind friend, I know." A brief pause followed, which she abruptly interrupted. "You are a physician, and in spite of your youth, a famous one—modesty is unnecessary. It is strange—I like physicians, and yet I fear them."

"Why?"

"Yes, why? I like them because they are usually earnest, talented men, who have experienced much, know much, and from whom new and remarkable things can always be learned. I fear them because they have no illusions."

"Perhaps that is not always correct."

"Oh, pardon me; how is a physician to preserve any illusions, when he knows human beings thoroughly, sees that an emotion depends upon the nerve of a tooth, a mood upon the degree of moisture contained in the air, and a character upon the healthy or diseased stomach. You leave your illusions upon your dissecting tables."

"What you say might be true if illusions and experiences came from the same source. But they do not."

"I don't fully understand. Explain yourself."

"What you call illusions are ideal images and aspirations, which originate in the sphere of our impulses and feelings, not in our sensible reasoning. But the impulses and feelings are more elementary and more deeply rooted, thought comes later and remains more on the surface. We inherit our illusions from the countless generations that have preceded us, our experiences we draw from our individual lives. An individual experience cannot outweigh the illusions of a thousand ancestors, who form a part of our organism. But, pardon me, I have caught myself in the midst of a tutor's lecture—you see that impulse is stronger than prudence."

"Do you ask pardon for that? What you say is so interesting. I suppose you have a very bad opinion of women, since you do not think them capable of understanding you?"

"I do not generalize. Whatever opinion I might have of women, I should not apply it to you."

"You understand how to pay compliments admirably. You are not commonplace."

He made no reply, but gazed at her with so earnest a look, expressive of such unconscious admiration and worship that she flushed, and with a nervous flutter of her fan rose. Bergmann rose also, bowed, and made a movement to retire. Ada opened her eyes in surprise, and involuntarily a word escaped her lips: "Why——"

"I thought I was wearying you."

She held out her finger-tips, which he pressed so warmly that she hastily withdrew her hand. Going to one of the three large windows in the drawing-room, she opened it and stepped out upon the broad, projecting balcony, which on the second story extended along the whole front of the castle. Leaning against the balustrade, both silently watched for a moment the scene before them. The July night was warm, and the air was stirless. Not a cloud appeared in the blackish-blue sky, the stars were sparkling brightly, and among them, almost at the zenith, sailed the full moon. At their feet lay the park, from which rose faint odours of unknown wild flowers and the more pungent fragrance of dewy grass and leafage. Directly in front of the building extended a lawn, with beds of flowers, on which the moonlight poured a sort of filmy glimmering mist, which gave the green grass and the bright hues of the flower-beds a light, silvery veil. Beyond the lawn, on all sides, towered the trees of the park, intersected by broad paths, through which the moonbeams flowed like a gleaming white stream between steep black banks. At the end of the central avenue appeared the Main, flowing in a broad, calm stream, with here and there a noisy, troubled spot in the midst of its peacefully-gliding waves, where a rock or a sand-bar interrupted the mirror-like expanse, and caused a rushing, foam-sprinkled whirlpool. Beyond the river, amid the light, floating night-mists, were dimly seen the houses of a little village, on whose window-panes a moonbeam often flashed, and at the left of the park rose the indistinct mass of the city of Marktbreit, whose steep, narrow streets were filled with shadows, while above the steeples and higher roofs the moon-rays rippled, bringing them out in bright relief against the dark picture.

PART II.

The spell of this moonlight night mounted to the heads of the two silent watchers on the balcony like an intoxicating draught, and sent cold chills down their spines. Almost without being aware what he was doing, Bergmann offered Ada his arm, which she accepted, leaning against him with a gentle, clinging

movement of her whole figure. There they stood, letting their dreamy eyes wander over the woods, the river, and the city. They would have forgotten the castle and the entertainment had not the subdued notes of the dance music reached them from the ball-room, whose windows opened upon the balcony on the opposite side of the façade, filling the night with low harmonies which were continued in the vibrations of their own nerves.

At this moment the clock in the Marktbreit steeple struck twelve, directly after the sound of a night watchman's horn was heard, and a wailing voice, rising in the sleeping streets of the city, called a few unintelligible words.

"What was that?" Ada whispered.

"The night watchman, according to the custom of the country, called the hour with a verse," replied Bergmann. A few minutes later the call was repeated, this time nearer, and so distinctly that it could be understood. The night watchman, with mournful emphasis, sung:

"Twelve strokes Time's limit do teach thee,
Man, think of thy mortality."

"Life in your Germany is like a fairy tale," said Ada, after repeating the verse to herself; "everything is so dreamy; so pervaded with poetry."

"Then stay in our Germany, stay with us," he pleaded, softly, his voice expressing far more than his words.

She shook her little head sorrowfully. "I came five years too late."

"Do not say that," replied Bergmann, pressing the bare arm which rested on his closely to his side. "How old are you now?"

It did not occur to her to smile at the question or to answer it, according to the ordinary custom of women, with an affected reply. She said, instead, as simply as a child:

"Twenty-three."

"And at twenty-three would it be too late to seek and strive for happiness in life? When sorrow has been experienced so young, it can surely be regarded as a childish disease and there is nothing to be done except to forget it as quickly as possible."

Ada gazed fixedly into vacancy, saying, as if lost in thought:

"No, no. That is not so. There are injuries which are incurable. The mother of two children is old at twenty-three. Since she can no longer offer a man the full happiness of love, she has no right to expect it from him."

He was about to answer, but with a hasty movement she placed her slender finger on her lip, saying:

"Hush! Not another word on this subject. Look"—and her hand pointed, down to the park.

From a bow window in the castle a powerful apparatus was sending a broad stream of electric light into the darkness. It often changed and moved, being thrown now here, then there. In its course it illumined the tops of the trees with a faint, livid phosphorescence, interwove the shrubbery with fantastic gliding spots of light, and gave the turf, wherever it was visible, the appearance of a strip of a glittering glacier. In the distance, where the light was lost in the dense groups of trees, it produced the illusion of indistinct shapes gleaming out there for a moment and then vanishing. It seemed as if one could see something mysterious moving or standing, perhaps a human form, wrapped in floating robes, perhaps a white marble statue hidden behind the foliage, perhaps a mist, gathering and scattering. Night moths and bats, fluttering across the bar of light out of the darkness into the darkness, shone brightly during the brief period of their passage, then suddenly vanished again like moss blown through a flame. The electric light seemed to make a road through the park, spread a silver carpet over it, and invite the two who watched its course to walk along this shining road to the distance where the shadowy white shapes hovered in the shrubbery, appearing and disappearing.

The temptation was irresistible.

"Let us go down," said Ada, and a few minutes later, with a light mantilla over her shoulders, she was walking by his side over the creaking gravel of the avenue and then over the noiseless side paths.

How blissful is the wandering of a handsome young couple, with glowing hearts in their breasts,

through a moonlit, fragrant summer night! Their feet do not feel the earth on which they tread, but seem to be floating on clouds. Nothing is left of the world save these two and the night which maternally conceals them—he and she, naught else, like Adam and Eve, when they were the only human dwellers in Paradise.

A damp branch of the bushes often brushed Ada's shoulders like an affectionate, caressing hand, as she slowly passed along. Now and then a bird whose nest was in the underbrush, disturbed in its sleep, fluttered up before them, and, stupid with slumber, flew to a neighboring bough. Ada sometimes plucked a flower, or cautiously touched with her finger one of the little glow worms, which in great numbers edged the path with their greenish light. They went down to the Main and back again to the park fence, facing Marktbreit. Just as they reached it the clock struck one, and the night watchman blew his horn, and again solemnly intoned his old-fashioned melody:

"One thing, Lord God of truth, we want;
A happy death to us all grant."

The full magic of the moment held them both in its thrall. Bergmann passionately clasped Ada's head between his hands, and pressed a long, ardent kiss on her golden hair and her white brow. Drawing a long breath, she submitted, not shrinking back until his burning lips sought hers. Their hearts beat audibly as they continued their walk, and long pauses interrupted their faltering speech.

What did they say to each other? Why repeat it? One who has never had such conversations will not understand them, and one who has experienced them, only needs to be reminded of them. They are always the same. Memories of childhood, rapture and extravagance, words of enthusiastic love, words which create the slight tremor of the skin like a cool breeze or the caress of toying fingers. So they walked a long, long time in the dark park, without heeding the flight of time, far from the world and unutterably happy.

"I am tired, Karl," Ada said at last, and leaned her head on his shoulder.

They were near a low, grassy bank, a few paces from the central avenue, and almost under the balcony of the castle, but completely concealed by the dense shadow of the over-arching trees. Karl spread his shawl over the bank and the ground, placed Ada on it, and reclined at her feet, resting his head in her lap. The balcony and the windows and lights of the drawing-room could all be seen from this spot. The window still stood open, the notes of a piano were heard, and a voice began the song:

"From out my tears will bloom
Full many a flow'ret fair."

A pretty, but somewhat cold, female voice, with no special tenderness and feeling. Yet the combined poesy of Heine and Schumann triumphed gloriously over the inadequacy of the execution. The wonderful, choral-like melody soared like the flight of a swan over the rapt pair, and completely dissolved their souls in melody and love:

"Before thy windows shall ring
The song of the nightingale,"

sang the woman's voice above, and the accompanying piano completed the air with an organ-like closing accord.

"Before thy windows shall ring
The song of the nightingale,"

Karl softly repeated, in his beautiful baritone, thrilling with an approaching tempest of passion, his arms clasped Ada's waist, and he gazed up at her with wild, flaming eyes. She bent down to him and her lips met his, which nearly scorched them. Leaning back, and gently pushing his head away, she whispered:

"Don't repeat verses by Heine; say something which is yours, and is composed for me."

"That I will, Ada," he cried, and, kneeling before her, clasping her in a close embrace and devouring her face with rapturous eyes, his whole being wrought up to the highest pitch of emotion, he said in a rapid improvisation, bursting from the inmost depths of his soul:

"In the shadowy hour when ghosts do flit,
Thou art to me a beauteous dream;
To thy lips I cling, yet while I love,

My happiness scarce real doth seem."

"Thy mouth and thy fair hands I kiss,
I kiss thine eyes and thy silken hair,
And should our lives end at this hour,
Still we should die a happy pair."

Her eyes were half closed, and her bosom heaved.

After a short pause, he continued slowly in a tremulous voice:

"Oh, God, that I should find thee here,
Only to cause my woe,
For thou wilt vanish from my gaze,
Ere the first cock doth crow."

"No, no," she murmured, almost inaudibly, sinking into his arms, which clasped her wildly and ardently, pressing her to his heart, while his lips showered kisses upon her and a sudden ecstasy began to cloud her senses.

Then, just at that moment, the clock in the Marktbreit church steeple struck two, the blast of the horn followed, and the mysterious voice rose in the invisible city and sang, this time close at hand and seemingly with significant emphasis:

"Two paths are to each mortal shown;
Lord, guide me in the narrow one."

As if stung by a serpent, Ada started up, wrenched herself by a sudden movement from Karl's clasping arms, and hastened away as though pursued by all the fiends of hell. A moment later, her white figure had vanished in the castle and Karl found himself alone before the grassy bank; he might have believed it a dream if the mantilla had not still lain there exhaling Ada's favourite perfume, a faint fragrance of carnations.

With heavy, dulled brain, aching limbs, and a strange sense of pain in his heart, Karl staggered back to the castle and to his room. For a long time sleep fled from him. A thousand scenes hovered in a confused throng before his fancy, blending into a witch-dance in whose mazes his own brain seemed to whirl also, until the giddiness became intolerable. He saw Ada in various transformations—now seated opposite to him at the table—then in the drawing-room—anon clasped in his arms—sometimes brightly illuminated as the queen of the ball-room—sometimes a faint, dark vision against the sombre background of the woodland—he inhaled her favourite perfume, felt the touch of her arms and her lips—he heard her voice and the melancholy music of the night watchman and the notes of the dancing tune from the ballroom, and amid these exciting delusions of the senses a restless, dream-haunted slumber at last overtook him.

* * * * *

It was almost noon when he awoke. At first his head felt confused and empty, but gradually he collected his thoughts, and now the experience of the previous night again stood clearly before his eyes. He suddenly recalled all his feelings during the walk through the woods, and, while dressing with the utmost haste, he exultingly repeated in a low tone again and again: "I love her! And she returns my love! And we will never part."

His first thought was to seek Ada. The mantilla, which he must return, afforded the pretext. After several inquiries he found her apartments, which were next to those occupied by the mistress of the house. Ada's maid opened the door and looked at him in surprise when he gave her the package and asked if he could see Mrs. Burgess.

"She has a headache, and probably won't be up to-day," was the curt answer, with which the door was closed in his face. This was a disappointment, and he felt very unhappy and forsaken. Yet he endeavoured to combat these feelings and mingled with the other guests. At noon he exchanged a hurried greeting with Frau Von Jagerfeld, who looked at him intently, but said nothing when he avoided her glance. In the afternoon he walked to Marktbreit and through the villages on the neighbouring hills, but the longing of his heart soon drove him back to the castle, where for hours he paced patiently up and down the pillared hall upon which most of the rooms occupied by the visitors opened. In the evening the guests again assembled at a banquet. Bergmann hoped that Ada would be present, and he was not disappointed. The summons to the meal had been given for the third time, nearly all the other

members of the house-party were in the drawing-room when Ada's door at last opened. Karl rushed forward and held out his hand to her. She started, paused an instant on the threshold, then hurried past him without turning her head, and swiftly vanished.

Karl stood as if he were turned to stone, gazing after her retreating figure; then forgetting the banquet and everything else, he hastened to his room and wrote Ada a letter, in which he repeated all the expressions of love lavished upon her during the preceding night, and begged for an explanation of her recent conduct. This missive he gave to Ada's maid, with the urgent request to deliver it to her mistress that very evening before she retired. Then he went out to try to conquer his agitation by a walk in the park, and when he thought that he had regained his composure, he returned to the drawing-room to see and to talk with Ada. The meal was over, gaiety reigned throughout the various groups, and a storm of reproaches for his absence from the table assailed him on all sides. But he looked in vain for Ada. She had retired immediately after dinner.

So she was now reading his letter! Perhaps now she was answering him! His heart throbbed wildly at this thought. He would gladly have made another attempt to see Ada in her own apartments, but he felt that he owed her due reserve, and determined to have patience until the next day.

When, on the following morning, he came out of his bed-chamber into the ante-room, he instantly saw on the table a sealed package which bore his address. He tore the wrapper with trembling hands and found within his own letter and a gilt-edged book. It was an English copy of Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream." On the first page, in a woman's delicate chirography, were the words: "A Midsummer Night's Dream. July 3, 188—. Ada." That was all. From the servant, who appeared at his ring, Bergmann learned the package had been left by Mrs. Burgess' maid early that morning. Mrs. Burgess had been gone half an hour.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HOW WOMEN LOVE (SOUL ANALYSIS) ***

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